

PLAN FIRST, DON'T 'RETROFIT'

Delivering on the promise of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) for Aboriginal and CALD people in NSW.

A Primer for the Planning for inclusion Think Tank

The NDIS is intended to be a once in a generation economic and social reform aimed at supporting a transformation of the lives of people with a disability in Australia, with a vision to optimise the social and economic independence, participation, choice and control of people with disability.

Our report suggests that the experiences of many people from CALD and Aboriginal communities can be understood in the context of entrenched disadvantage and disconnection, and that delivering on the stated outcomes of the NDIS presents a range of additional challenges for them, necessitating an approach that learns from and builds upon past experiences, to do things smarter and more effectively.

Examination of the roll-out to date suggests that the full implementation of the NDIS represents an opportunity to break the established pattern, engaging more effectively from the outset, to achieve genuinely better outcomes for people in Aboriginal and CALD communities.

The Way Forward

Our report identifies a number of broad 'enablers' that can change and improve the way that the NDIS engages with and works more effectively for CALD and Aboriginal people with disability.

Enablers: Working smarter with CALD people

- **Build the cultural competence of organisations.**
This requires compliance guidelines, and resourcing, which ensures that organisations are committed to culturally appropriate practice at an everyday level and in all of their undertakings.
- **Ensure good quality planning that is culturally appropriate and person-centred.**
As such, this should take into account aspects of a person's identity, including cultural and linguistic diversity, when designing supports to meet their aspirations.
- **Information dissemination, assessment and referral processes that are easily understood and prioritise access,**
in spite of eligibility barriers under the NDIS Act, for example and that ensure people can gain access to at least some level of support.
- **Work with communities to build a culture of human rights for people with a disability.**
Service-providers, policy-makers and other stakeholders should ensure that their engagement uses terms that engage families and individuals with a disability, but who may not, for a variety of reasons, identify as such. This could take the form of advertising information sessions or workshops as concerning 'health and wellbeing'. The imperative should be to 'de-medicalise' disability, to the furthest possible extent, whilst taking practical steps to engage other members of the community.

Enablers: Working smarter with Aboriginal people:

- **Develop and provide information that is relevant and culturally appropriate.**
Materials and resources developed for Aboriginal people should cater to the spectrum of communication needs, prioritising face-to-face interaction and existing community networks as means of information dissemination supported, and not led, by online platforms. Ensuring that Aboriginal staff lead engagement with communities, to build trust, is also vital to ensuring the culturally appropriate delivery of information and materials relating to the NDIS.
- **Adequate resourcing of engagement plans and strategies.**
Engagement and information strategies must be resourced to respond to both place and culture so people are provided with information about what is possible and relevant; and who they can talk to locally to find out more. Engagement with

the NDIS must be broadened beyond 'disability services' alone, to include others engaged in the health and wellbeing of communities, including Aboriginal Medical Services and trusted local general practitioners.

- **Ensure quality planning.**

This should be holistic and, inclusive, taking into account a person's culture and addressing their needs and aspirations in the context of their wider family and kinship network. Planning processes should dedicate the time needed to deliver a quality plan that the person is satisfied with.

- **Recognise that additional work is required to ensure that Aboriginal people and local communities can engage most effectively with the NDIS.**

Dedicate additional resources to addressing inequities in access and optimal support for Aboriginal people with a disability, recognising that there are unique historical factors and contemporary realities for Aboriginal people. This could include through additional face-to-face workshops and intensive community engagement once people develop a plan, to ensure they are deriving maximum benefit from that plan and related supports.

- **Demonstrate leadership and inclusion by getting the timing right.**

Strategies for developing NDIS processes, implementation plans, procurement and roll out planning must, from the earliest stages, map how Aboriginal people and communities will be engaged and their needs responded to as a matter of priority. This will overcome any perception that these matters are dealt with retrospectively and will demonstrate a genuine commitment to inclusion and culturally responsive practice.

- **Enable continual improvement of NDIS processes and service delivery.**

Make sure that resourcing is available to implement suggestions made through consultation(s) and continue to work closely with people in local communities.

On the basis of these enablers, we are looking at practical recommendations that can be implemented now, to ensure the NDIS works better for Aboriginal and CALD people in subsequent phases of rollout. These recommendations involve measures covering;

- **Tendering**

Ensuring that tendering process are informed by local knowledge and connections, adequately recognise and fund community partners, and utilise, train and employ Aboriginal and CALD peoples to deliver services wherever possible.

- **Engagement**

Ensuring that planning for roll-out in each area includes structured community engagement, informed by consultation with community Elders and representatives, commences at least 6 months prior to roll out in each area.

- **Workforce Development**

Ensuring that all organisations involved demonstrate genuine commitment to the practical inclusion of Aboriginal and CALD peoples, including employing them as senior staff and Local Area Coordination managers, and engaging early with Aboriginal and CALD community organisations to enable realistic co-design processes and development of an effective community engagement workforce.

- **Staff Recruitment and Development**

Ensuring encouragement for staff translation capability by adequately remunerating them for translation work, and developing funded project officers within existing organisations to work across agencies to deliver individualised NDIS related information and solutions, responsive to cultural and individual needs.

- **Outreach**

Developing scaffolding approaches to enable ongoing engagement with relevant peripheral service providers, ensuring wide knowledge of and access to, the NDIS, as well as ensuring an ongoing structure of workshops and ongoing engagement with participants already in the system to identify barriers and issues, enable access to remedial measures, provide feedback and assist continuous improvement.

- **Information and Resources**

Co-designing development of a range of flexible communication approaches (plain language, written, iconographic and verbal) to better connect with potential participants, explain the support planning process and enable their participation in planning and review, and use of consumer engagement strategies that understand how local communities access information, and use those channels effectively.

What Next?

The task now is to come up with specific, practical ways to act upon and progress the recommendations of this report and ensure that as the NDIS rolls out, we enable better and more effective engagement with Aboriginal and CALD people with disability, and deliver on the promise of the scheme for people in those communities.