Advocacy Group Submission to Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS - Capacity and Culture inquiry

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Contact

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1. Who we are

NSW Council for Intellectual Disability (CID) is a systemic advocacy organisation that works to ensure all people with intellectual disability are valued members of the community. CID has been a leader in disability rights for more than 60 years.

People with disability are at the front and centre of everything we do – they are decision makers, staff members, board members and spokespeople. We work to build a community that protects rights, includes everyone and supports people well. We focus on issues that people with disability tell us are important, such as the NDIS, health, jobs, education, transport and safety.

CID promotes human rights. We help people with disability to be heard, we speak up on the big issues and campaign for change. We advise on how to be more inclusive so that our society is equal and accessible.

We believe people with disability should have the same opportunities as everyone else. Through CID all people with disability and their families and supporters can learn, build skills, and actively participate in the community. We provide information, hold workshops and develop useful resources. We go to community events, share our stories and connect with peers.

The CID advocacy group consists of members with intellectual disability who work together on the big issues. They meet monthly, run campaigns, meet with members of parliament and other advocacy works.

2. Response to Terms of Reference: A

Capability and culture of the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), with reference to operational processes and procedures, and nature of staff employment

2.1 Employment of people with intellectual disability in the NDIA

The NDIA Disability Inclusion Plan 2022 – 2025 outlines their commitment to employ people with disability. That document is available here:
https://www.ndis.gov.au/media/4606/download?attachment

While it is clear the NDIA does employ people with disability, the data from their employee survey outlined in that document suggests very few of their staff have intellectual disability. People with intellectual disability should be more included among their staff, as they comprise a substantial portion of NDIS participants.

With the right supports, people with intellectual disability can work well in a wide variety of roles. This can have a positive influence on changing the culture of a workplace, and challenging discriminatory attitudes amongst its staff.

Employing people with disability within public sector organisations is also in keeping with Australia's commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

3. Response to Terms of Reference: B

The impacts of NDIA capability and culture on the experiences of people with disability and NDIS participants trying to access information, support and services from the Agency.

Methodology for response to 3B

CID has an Advocacy group; the membership are all people with intellectual disability. They meet regularly to develop and run campaigns for the rights of people with intellectual disability. The Advocacy group have been working and campaigning on NDIS issues for many years.

The CID Advocacy group met. We went through the Terms of Reference with them, and recorded the responses. We made the Terms of Reference easier to understand and used open-ended questions. The responses below identify the most relevant issues experienced by people with intellectual disability.

3.1. Issues with regards interactions with staff

Advocacy group members spoke about difficulties in interacting with NDIA staff.

Staff not really listening:

Sensing that staff were not truly listening to what the participant was reporting was a common theme:

> *Staff are trained for the paperwork not the people*

Need for staff training:

Some of the issues raised indicated staff need further training.

For example, people were told inconsistent information from different staff using the call centre line. This was made even worse by processes that made finding the correct answers inaccessible. One described it as:

> *Red tape [wrapped] around consistent information*

Another participant reported being told she had support coordination, and that everyone in NDIS gets support coordination. However, this isn't correct.

3.2. Closure of offices and reliance on a call centre:

Some people find communication via telephone to be far less accessible than face to face. Therefore, the closure of offices made communicating with staff much more difficult for some people.

One said:

Pre covid-19 management was better.

There was an office you could go to speak to someone, not a call centre with people who don't understand disability.

3.3 An inaccessible system:

The issues raised above combine to make interaction with NDIA staff less accessible for participants than it could be. This is especially problematic for people with intellectual disability.

People reported the need for external support to advocate for what they need.

Without my mother or auntie I would miss things and forget things

Unless you have good support or a good advocate it's hard to get a good outcome (plan).

However, not everyone has such support. The result of NDIA processes that are inaccessible to participants is that their plans can fail to adequately reflect their true support needs.

4. Recommendations

1) **Training for NDIA staff**
   a. On disability specific information including how to communicate with people with intellectual disability. Ideally this would be co-designed and co-delivered with people with intellectual disability.
   b. To improve consistency of information given throughout the process.

2) **Provide more accessible options for participants to interact with staff:**
   a. Provide in-person options for accessing information
   b. Allow an option to be allocated a specific NDIA staff member that participants with intellectual disability can contact with questions and have an ongoing relationship with.

3) **Employ people with intellectual disability within the NDIA and LACs.**