

The Hon Christian Porter MP
Minister for Social Services
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives, Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
10 July 2017

Dear Minister Porter,

I am writing to you regarding the recent reports of the Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) on the inquiry into the *Provision of services under the NDIS for people with psychosocial disabilities related to a mental health condition*, and an update on the *General issues around the implementation and performance of the NDIS*.

Community Mental Health Australia (CMHA) urges the Government to implement the recommendations of the Joint Standing Committee, as a matter of importance, to address the significant issues and concerns with the implementation of the NDIS for people with psychosocial disability.

Along with many organisations, CMHA made submissions and provided evidence to hearings on the significant issues impacting people with psychosocial disability. These issues include the NDIS planning process; the expertise of NDIS assessors and planners in psychosocial disability; the problems occurring with overall implementation; the plan review process; access issues for NDIS applicants; and the need for the NDIS legislation to be reviewed.

CMHA notes that all the recommendations of both the reports noted above from the Joint Standing Committee are important and should be implemented. There are a number we would draw your attention to which can be implemented without undue delay and address some immediate and urgent issues.

Recommendations from the *General issues around the implementation and performance of the NDIS* include:

- That the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) provide an opportunity for participants, and those who support them, to view, comment, and rectify any errors in their plan in advance of it being finalised and implemented.
- That the NDIA publish the results of its participants and providers pathways review, specifically the areas identified for improvement, and the strategies in place to achieve improved outcomes.

Recommendations from the *Provision of services under the NDIS for people with psychosocial disabilities related to a mental health condition* include:

- That the NDIS Act is reviewed to assess the permanency provisions in Section 24 (1) (b) and the appropriateness of the reference to 'psychiatric condition' in 24 (1) (a).

- The NDIA, in conjunction with the mental health sector, develops and adopts a validated fit-for-purpose assessment tool to assess the eligibility of people with psychosocial disability that focuses on their functional capacity for social and economic participation.
- The NDIA monitors eligibility rates for people with psychosocial disability to, a) understand the reasons for a higher rejection rate compared to other disabilities; and b) to build a clearer picture of the size and needs of the people who have been found ineligible for NDIS services.
- Clients currently receiving mental health services, including services under Commonwealth programs transitioning to the NDIS, namely Partners in Recovery (PIR), Personal Helpers and Mentors (PHaMs), Day to Day Living (D2DL, and Mental Health Respite: Carer Support (MHR:CS), should not have to apply for the NDIS to have guarantee of continuity of supports and access services.
- The NDIA, in conjunction with the mental health sector, creates a specialised team of NDIS planners trained and experienced in working with people who have a mental health condition as their primary disability.
- The committee recommend the Australian, state and territory governments clarify and make public how they will provide services for people with a psychosocial disability who are not participants in the NDIS.

The implementation of these specific – and the other – recommendations will address some immediate issues, and put in place a process to address more complex matters.

CMHA remains committed to the NDIS and the positive impact it can have on the lives of people living with psychosocial disability. While the Government and the NDIA has acknowledged that there is significant improvements to be made, CMHA are concerned that the problems are being characterised as ‘hiccups’ or ‘teething’ problems, which does not recognise the gravity of the problems which risk becoming systemic if not urgently addressed.

CMHA urges the Government to listen to the voices of the consumers, carers, non-government organisations and service providers who made submissions to these inquiries and implement the recommendations of the Joint Standing Committee.

Yours sincerely



Kerry Hawkins, Vice President, Community Mental Health Australia

CC. The Hon Kevin Andrews MP, Chair Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS
The Hon Jane Prentice MP, Assistant Minister for Social Services and Disability Services
Dr Helen Nugent AO, Chair NDIS Board
Rob De Luca CEO NDIA