

ECCV Submission on the Proposal for a National Disability Insurance Scheme Quality and Safeguarding framework

April 2015

The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) is the voice of Multicultural Victoria. It is a member driven organization with a statewide leadership role in lobbying all levels of government on behalf of multicultural communities in areas such as employment, education, health, disability, child protection, justice and culture.

ECCV appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the consultation about the National Disability Insurance Scheme Quality and Safeguarding framework and invites the NDIA to consider the following areas when implementing the NDIS.

Information about service providers

The full rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) will likely to bring some additional challenges to culturally diverse communities who are already finding the disability sector very complex and fragmented. ECCV's primary concern is in regards to the potential risks associated with the influx of more operators into the disability market with the high probability of increased unethical behaviour. The present arrangement amounts to government providing 'block funding' payments to disability services providers to offer mostly a range of non-individualised services such as information, referral, advice and community capacity building initiatives.

Through funding agreement, governments (state and commonwealth) ensure that organisations deliver safe and high quality care. Under the NDIS funding model, most supports will be individualised, giving people with disability the opportunity to choose their service providers. ECCV commends the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) for its commitment to establishing a rigorous NDIA provider registration process that ensures service providers' suitability to participate in the scheme. However, the risk of organisations with shady business activities slipping through the net is still present.

They are most likely to target people in vulnerable situations such as culturally diverse community members with limited English-language skills and lack of understanding about rights and complaints processes. ECCV would like the NDIA implements an integrated awareness raising campaign and delivers information sessions at venues frequented by culturally diverse communities.

Recommendation 1:

ECCV proposes that an integrated and tailored awareness campaign be implemented to warn culturally diverse communities about service providers with unethical and predatory behaviours.

Improving access to information about the scheme

ECCV Community feedback revealed an acute under-representation of people from culturally diverse communities in the disability support system due to a number of reasons including lack of engagement of service providers to multicultural communities and awareness by communities about appropriate disability service provision¹. A series of consultations held by ECCV as part of 'Talking Disability' project also highlighted the challenges facing service providers to locate members with disabilities from culturally diverse backgrounds and promote their services to them. With regards to NDIS, understanding is low and the need for extra help to navigate the scheme is crucial.

A recent ECCV consultation with its key partners working in the sector, intending to contribute to the consultation paper '*Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) Policy Framework*' supports this view. ECCV believes that there are ways to increase community awareness about NDIS. These include word of mouth, use of visual formats when providing information, ethnic media and regular information sessions.

Recommendation 2:

ECCV recommends that the NDIA develops and implements strategies for information dissemination about NDIS for multicultural communities.

Culturally competent workforce

After the full rollout of the scheme from July 2016, Local Area Coordinators (LACs) will be the driven force on the implementation and administration of the NDIS. LACs will have the responsibility to assist people with a disability and/or their families living in local communities. In order words, they will help participants in this scheme connect or link with the formal and informal support systems located in their local areas. Additionally, they will play a key role in providing support to those who opt to self-manage their own funds to plan supports they need.

LACs will also perform additional functions consisting of increasing awareness and familiarity of the scheme among community, building and enhancing community capacity and acting as sources for information about the scheme. Therefore, it is crucial that diversity and cultural competency are to be seen as the cornerstone of the recruitment process, planning and delivery of the NDIS.

ECCV firmly believes, based on its stakeholder feedback that the successful implementation of the NDIS lies with the recruitment of bilingual and bicultural workers with preference to those with disability, especially in areas with high proportions of residents from culturally diverse backgrounds. Equally important is the service providers' commitment to delivering culturally responsive services. Therefore, it is essential that the NDIA ensures, when accessing providers' applications, particularly those that work with culturally diverse communities, they meet cultural awareness and competence requirement.

¹ ECCV submission to the Inquiry to Social Inclusion and Victorians with disability, 2014

Recommendation 3:

ECCV recommends that cultural competence is ingrained in the NDIA's policies, practices and service delivery.

Recommendation 4:

ECCV suggests that the NDIA considers recruiting people who are bilingual and bicultural as Local Areas Coordinators, particularly in the areas of high concentration of ethnic communities.

Recommendation 5:

ECCV recommends that the NDIA includes cultural awareness and competence in the registration requirements that determine suitability of providers, especially those working multicultural communities.

Responsive complaints handling systems

ECCV recognises and applauds the NDIA efforts to establish robust complaints handling systems that allow the scheme participants to hold service providers accountable for upholding ethical behaviour standards. However, ECCV would like to point out the fact that many ethnic communities in general are reluctant to fill complain² due to a number of factors³, including limited or lack of English language skills, unfamiliar and complex systems and uneasiness about the idea of challenging authority. It is also important to note that access to complaints handling systems can get more complicated for people with disabilities from culturally diverse backgrounds because of additional barriers they face, thus making them more averse to lodge complaints.

ECCV foresees some potential problems arising. Of particular concern are people opting to manage their own plans and who may consider employing persons sharing the same linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In such case, clients would find difficult to report abuses perpetrated against them for fear of ostracism and retribution from their respective communities. While ECCV acknowledges the valuable role that bicultural workers can play in giving good care to clients from the same cultures, it is essential that safeguards are in place to eliminate or minimise these risks.

ECCV sees benefits in having community visitor schemes⁴ in the NDIS as a possible solution to this issue, giving the clients the opportunity to share their concerns with a representative of the NDIA and at the same allowing the agency to have a channel to receive feedback on the responsiveness of the support services funded under the NDIS scheme.

² Victoria University, *Review of current cultural and linguistic diversity and cultural competence requirements, minimum standards and benchmarks for Victoria health projects*, 2009.

³ FECCA, *Complaints handling – how governments agencies deal with complaints from the public: A CALD community perspective*, 2013

⁴ A community visitor scheme is currently implemented in Victoria and consists of carrying out home visits to clients.

Recommendation 5:

ECCV proposes that the NDIA develop resources in community languages and schedules a series of information sessions for culturally diverse communities to raise their level of understanding of the complaint systems and awareness of their rights.

Recommendation 6:

ECCV recommends that further safeguards be in place to protect people with disabilities from culturally diverse backgrounds managing their own plans.

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