

## **Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Disability Network of Queensland's response to the Draft Report into a National Disability Care and Support Scheme**

The Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Disability Network of Queensland (A&TSIDNQ) is a network of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders with Disability auspiced by Queenslanders with Disability Network Inc (QDN). The Network was formed to give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders with disability a voice in local, state and federal forums so that they may have input into policies and programs that affect them.

Following the publication of the Productivity Commission's Draft Report into a National Disability Care and Support Scheme, A&TSIDNQ held consultations with its members to gain their feedback to the recommendations made in Chapter 9 'Disability within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community'. What follows is the view of A&TSIDNQ with regard the findings of the Commission's inquiry with regard to disability in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community and the recommendations of the Draft Report derived from them.

### **Recommendation 9.1 – Governments should consider enhancing the effectiveness of a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a disability by:**

- **fostering smaller community-based operations that consult with local communities and engage local staff, with support from larger experienced service providers**

A&TSIDNQ agrees that a smaller community based approach to service delivery is an effective way to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability as they may be more able to respond to emergent needs and be innovative. Some Network members expressed concern that skill and expertise in providing disability support is limited or non-existent in some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and so the "support from larger experienced service providers" would need to be assured. Other factors in this model of service delivery that should be assured include:

- That workers will be paid at a level that values disability support;
- Guaranteed access to training;
- Ensuring the operations adopt a 'person-centred' approach to service delivery;
- Ensuring the operations deliver their services in a culturally sensitive manner; and
- Having clear terms of reference with regard to who makes decisions on the services provided to each individual.

### **Employing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff**

A&TSIDNQ supports this element of the Draft Report's recommendation. The Network believes this outcome is best able to be delivered by:

- Setting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment targets;
- Rethinking and stream-lining the criminal history checking protocols applicable;
- Establishing a buddy/mentoring program to support new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees;
- Implementing awareness programs to raise the profile of disability care and support as a socially useful and valued career; and
- Providing training and payment for family members who provide disability care and support informally.

### **Developing the cultural competency of non-Indigenous staff**

A&TSIDNQ agrees with the Draft Report's identification of 'cultural competency' as a key element of a successful Disability Care and Support strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability. Network members suggest that the 'cultural competency' of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff is best developed by:

- Providing cultural awareness training to non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff that goes beyond general information to explore the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and their interactions with disability (this may need to extend to examining the very family of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person with disability);
- Working in partnership with Reconciliation Australia and other organisations with experience in cross-cultural awareness training in the planning and development phase; and
- Reciprocating through the provision of 'cultural competency training' to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people so they are better able to operate in the broader 'white' Australian community.

**In its initiatives for delivering disability supports to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the NDIS should be mindful of the wider positive measures addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage being adopted throughout Australia.**

A&TSIDNQ agrees that the NDIS should adopt best practice when it comes to delivering disability supports to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. However, the Network notes that what is a "positive measure" to one observer may be "blatant discrimination on the grounds of race" to another. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians with disability should therefore have the option of accessing the benefits of the NDIS through mainstream channels if that is their preference.

In addition to the provisions of the Draft Report's Chapter 9 Recommendations, A&TSIDNQ also asks the Productivity Commission to consider the following factors with regard to how the NDIS can best meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability:

**How would the NDIS work in rural and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities?**

A&TSIDNQ believes that:

- NDIS services should be used to complement and expand current services;
- Training programmes may need to be prepared to come to remote areas;
- Local career paths should be available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disability support workers to enhance a community's ability to develop and retain them;
- Local Area Coordinators should be employed to commence the process of identifying people's needs and the local resources available to meet them; and
- A fly-in fly-out approach be considered to provide support to rural and remote service providers.

**How would the NDIS work in urban Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities?**

A&TSIDNQ believes that:

- Regardless of their location, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability should be able to access culturally appropriate support; and
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability should be able to choose (the generally available) support they need.

**How should the NDIS support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability to be connected to culture?**

A&TSIDNQ believes that this is best assured by:

- Providing supports and services in ways that preserve the family connections of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person with disability; and
- Supporting people to attend culturally significant activities.

**How might the NDIS fund accessible housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability in communities *of their choice*?**

A&TSIDNQ understands that housing is a key component of disability support. Therefore, the Network believes it is important to establish:

- Rigorous national standards to regulate and require the construction of homes that are accessible by default;
- A large stock of accessible homes across Queensland and Australia; and
- Social investment schemes that allow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to purchase accessible homes more easily.

**Do the Draft Report's Chapter 9 Recommendations set up a different system for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability?**

A&TSIDNQ believes that it does. Therefore, to ensure that this approach is not discriminatory, the Network believes it is essential that:

- Block funding approaches (as currently used by Queensland's Department of Communities – Disability and Community Care Services) should only be an option when the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person with a disability's family situation warrants it as the best outcome; and
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability (as with their non-Indigenous counterparts) should be able to self-manage funds and choose the services and equipment they receive.

A&TSIDNQ are currently awaiting the outcome of a submission for recurrent funding from the Queensland Government. It is hoped that this will enable the Network to continue to build and engage its membership. With just 2 years of one-off funding, A&TSIDNQ has built a membership of over 55 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members with disability. It is the lived experience of these people that has informed this submission.