

This submission responds to the Productivity Commission's Draft Report on Disability Care and Support. The Ethnic Child Care, Family and Community Services Co-operative (ECCFCSC) wishes to make the following points regarding the current draft report:

Awareness of the NDIS among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities:

- Raising awareness of the scheme within CALD communities must be outlined in detail. Non-government organisations (NGOs), community organisations and groups that work with CALD communities need to work in a coordinated approach to ensure that information about NDIS is consistent.
- The NDIS is a complex system therefore whatever approach is used, it is important that NGOs and community organisations do not duplicate each other's work. This creates confusion amongst CALD communities and isolates them further from accessing information and assistance about the scheme.
- One approach to raising awareness about NDIS is to hold language specific focus groups in areas where there is high concentration of CALD communities. It has also been found that the best results are achieved when the facilitator is bilingual and from the same CALD community. It would be more effective to work with local CALD community organisations or associations when conducting focus groups.
- Promotion of focus groups should go through ethnic media such as SBS and community radio in all the languages. This ensures that information about NDIS reach people at grassroots level.
- Issues such as gender, culture, education, religious and other concerns need to be considered within CALD specific groups. For example in a mixed gender group, women in some cultures may not speak up and participate in the true sense because of religious and cultural reasons.
- Use of interpreters in a mixed group (English and non-English) has been found to be not only disruptive but there seems to be minimal to nil participation from the participants who speak a language other than English.
- The presentation material plays an important role in the process whether it is translated material or visual. It needs to be simplified and easily understood for CALD clients to participate and make input.
- Other forms of outlets such as language specific newspapers should also be used to provide information besides the traditional *"contact points such as Post Offices, Centrelink offices, Medicare offices, medical practices and health centres"*. CALD communities do not necessarily take advantage of written information even if available in their language. With the current system, most parents/carers get information through word of mouth from other parents/carers in similar circumstances.
- Is there a provision to fund interpreters within the scheme? Currently, HACC service providers and CALD communities use the Telephone Interpreting Service (TIS) provided by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship. Occasionally, funding is provided through the NSW Department of Family & Community Services for interpreting services **but** only for HACC funded service providers.
- For many small community organisations like the ECCFCSC that deal with a large number of CALD individuals, TIS is too expensive to access on a daily basis. Furthermore, their cancellation policy which "must be received in writing at least 24 hours prior to booking" does not seem to offer flexibility in extenuating circumstances. With our experience with our CALD clients, last minute cancellations are a rarity. However, if a situation arises where this is unavoidable, it is a costly expense that we cannot afford. Our organisation tries to use bilingual community workers from within our organisation or from another organisation to facilitate meetings and discussions with CALD clients. (click on link for current TIS charges: http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/help-with-english/help_with_translating/service-charges.htm)
- As a result, clients have to wait for days and sometimes weeks for a specific bilingual community worker to become available. This adds to the client's stress and increase workload for already overstretched community workers.
- More attention needs to focus on how to explain the complex features of the scheme such as:
 - ❖ Assessing care and support needs
 - ❖ Having the decision-making power



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- ❖ Difference between self directed funding & choice of package
- ❖ How both models work & its disadvantages
- ❖ What happens when they reach pension age

The above are just some of the issues that CALD communities will need to understand thoroughly in order to make informed decisions.

- If NDIS is implemented, it is a good investment for all Disability Service Providers to undergo cultural awareness training. They need to have an understanding of the various cultural barriers that make it harder for CALD communities to access services and information. The scheme needs to be inclusive and part of that is for Service Providers to be culturally aware and sensitive to the needs of CALD communities.

Summary:

- Non-Government Organisations, Community Organisations, CALD Associations and Service Providers need to work in a coordinated approach so that information sent out to CALD communities about NDIS is consistent and clear.
- Promotion of NDIS should use every type of media outlet available such as SBS television, language specific radio programmes and newspapers, translated pamphlets/brochures. The information presented in these formats should be simple and easy to understand.
- Issues such as gender, education, religion and culture need to be considered when raising awareness about NDIS to CALD communities. All these concerns impact on CALD communities having a thorough understanding of NDIS and how it works.
- Will there be provision within the scheme to fund interpreters to assist CALD individuals with disabilities and their families/carers? The current Telephone Interpreting Services (TIS) provided by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship is too costly, especially for small not for profit community organisations that work with a high volume of CALD clients.
- Certain aspects of the NDIS that are very important need to be properly explained to CALD communities so that they have a comprehensive understanding of the impacts on the person with the disability as well as the carer/family.
- Finally, it is important for Service Providers to have culturally awareness training. As part of their inclusive practices, they need to have a good understanding of how culture impacts on CALD clients ability to access their services or to ask for help.