

COMMUNIQUÉ

Community and Disability Services Minister's Conference

Adelaide

Friday, 4 June 2010

The Community and Disability Services Ministers met in Adelaide today to progress key national reforms for children's services, people with disability and their carers.

Disability Services

National Disability Agreement

Information sharing on key elements of the national disability agreement (NDA)

Ministers noted the progress undertaken by jurisdictions in implementing the key elements of the Disability Agreement.

Ministers also noted the significant effort above and beyond the national reform agenda from the Australian, State and Territory Governments which support the outcomes of the National Disability Agreement and enhance the lives of people with disability.

Innovative initiatives being delivered across jurisdictions include:

- The Australian Government's \$1.7 billion investment in the Disability Employment Services, and improved assessment processes to support engagement in the workforce for people with disability;
- Initiatives in New South Wales to expand recreation and leisure classes for people with disability and their families;
- The introduction of a three year Transitions to Employment Program to assist school leavers in Victoria;
- A 10 year plan for supporting Queenslanders with disability proposes a blueprint for the future, including for children with disability and their families;
- The launch in Western Australia of Count Us In - Disability Future Directions, a 15-year strategic approach for a whole of community and across government response;
- South Australia has implemented initiatives for promoting consumer choice and self management of funding;
- In Tasmania, new Gateway Services streamline and support referral pathways to specialist services;
- Thirteen initiatives under the ACT Social Enterprise Hub demonstrate successful

examples of how government and community partnerships can create viable social enterprises;

- A new Office of Disability shopfront has opened in Darwin to streamline access to NT disability services.

New Zealand

- Establishment of a Ministerial Issues Committee in New Zealand to drive action on the New Zealand Disability Strategy.
- Additional funding for disability supports, promoting positive attitudes, promoting accessible housing, and to provide for independent promotion in monitoring of the rights of persons with disabilities.
- A review of special education.
- Launch of Whanau Ora to restore the self-belief of families, in their ability to exercise their rights and responsibilities.

Australian disability parking scheme

Ministers agreed to national eligibility criteria and minimum standards for disability parking concessions for the Australian Disability Parking Scheme. Ministers also commended these matters to Roads/Transport Ministers for their endorsement as well as a commitment to roll-out the new Australian Disability Parking Permit to existing permit holders by the end of 2010.

Development of the new eligibility criteria and national minimum standards for concessions was informed by permit holders, stakeholder consultations and public information sessions in 2009 and further advice from medical associations, peak organisations and local government.

The minimum standards for disability parking concessions give States and Territories the flexibility to provide additional concessions to meet the needs of local permit holders.

The new eligibility criteria and minimum concessions will be introduced once each state and territory is able to make the necessary changes in their local laws and regulations. In the meantime, current rules will continue to apply in each State and Territory until notified by the local agency that issues disability parking permits.

Future directions for young people in residential aged care

Australian and State and Territory Governments have been working together to develop options beyond the current initiative for young people in, or at risk of entering residential aged care.

Ministers re-affirmed their commitment to the importance of finding appropriate accommodation options for younger people with disability.

Better measurement of need

Ministers endorsed the National Need and Supply Model which develops a nationally consistent methodology for measuring the potential population demand, and for measuring service provision to estimate the level of unmet demand for specialist disability services.

Early intervention and prevention revised framework

Ministers endorsed a National Framework and work plan for Early Intervention and Prevention. This Framework enables each jurisdiction to examine their systems and identify gaps to improve the effectiveness of their early intervention programs. This will lead to better outcomes for people with disability, their families and carers, particularly in the early years and at key transition points, such as the transition from early childhood settings to school, from primary school to secondary school and adolescence, and from school to post school settings and adulthood.

More consistent access to aids and equipment

Ministers today agreed to keep working on a number of initiatives to give people with disability more consistent access to the aids and equipment they need live independently, participate in the community and reach their potential.

Ministers agreed to establish, by December 2010, a nationally consistent list of core equipment that all people with similar disabilities should be able to access, no matter where they live. All jurisdictions will also strengthen their portability protocols to allow people who move across state borders to retain their access to core equipment they need for their disability.

Ministers also agreed to implement by December 2012 aids and equipment initiatives to create more streamlined access and simplify the multiplicity of programs currently confronting people in need of support.

Acknowledging the critical need to meet increasing demand for aids and equipment, Ministers also agreed to initiatives to improve the supply of equipment, review current subsidy and co-contribution arrangements and improve assessment and prescription processes.

Improvements to the administration and access of disability advocacy

Ministers endorsed an exposure draft of the National Disability Advocacy Framework which is being developed to provide consistency in the delivery of disability advocacy and improve access for people with disability.

The Framework aims to provide people with disability with access to robust and independent advocacy that promotes, protects and ensures their human rights, encouraging an enhanced quality of life and greater participation and social inclusion.

A consultation process has been agreed by Ministers to seek the views of the disability advocacy sector on the key elements of the Framework with consultations to be undertaken from July 2010.

National disability strategy

Ministers noted the draft National Disability Strategy (NDS). The final NDS will be forwarded to the Council of Australian Governments for endorsement at their next meeting.

The NDS will set out a ten year national plan for improving life outcomes for Australians with disabilities, their families and carers. The NDS will be built around six policy areas: health and wellbeing; personal and community support; economic security; learning and skills; rights, protection, justice and legislation; and inclusive and accessible communities.

Ministers noted the release of the COAG Reform Council (CRC) report on the National Disability Agreement today. They discussed the importance of reporting under the NDS, including possible roles for the CRC.

Implications of the national health and hospitals network

Ministers noted, with the exception of Western Australia (and Victoria for the purposes of HACC), that under the National Health and Hospitals Network Agreement, community care services (currently delivered under the Home and Community Care program) for people with disability and their carers under the age of 65 (under 50 for Indigenous Australians) will be funded under the National Disability Agreement.

Ministers agreed to develop new performance indicators for the National Disability Agreement to reflect this agreement.

Children's Services and Child Protection

National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children

Ministers agreed to priority projects under the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children to be jointly progressed over the next six months.

These projects are:

- improving support for foster, kinship and grandparent carers, noting that the Australian Government has recently commissioned research on behalf of community services ministers on this issue;
- more effective transition to independent living for young people in out of home care;
- A nationally consistent approach to working with children checks; and
- Responding to sexual abuse.

Ministers also agreed that the Annual Report on the progress of implementing actions under the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children will be provided to the Council of Australian Governments in the second half of 2010.

Draft national standards for out of home care

Ministers agreed to shortly finalise a working document for National Standards for Out of Home Care including draft national standards, proposed principles and implementation timeframes.

This working document will form the basis of further consultation, refinement and prioritisation.

Ministers will consider the final national standards, measures and implementation plans at their next meeting.

This is a key action under the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020.

Adoption

Ministers agreed to a joint national research study into past adoption practices to be conducted by the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

The terms of reference and scope for the study will be agreed between Ministers shortly.

The Australian Institute of Family Studies will consult widely in conducting the study over the next 18 months with a report to be delivered to Ministers by the end of 2011.

The Ministers agreed to a further research study to assess adoption and other legal options for achieving permanency and enhancing outcomes for children.

This will include an examination of legislation across jurisdictions related to decision making for children unable to remain with their birth parents on a long-term basis.

National find and connect service

Ministers noted the Australian Government's development of new national records and family tracing service for Forgotten Australians and former child migrants. Ministers agreed to continue to work together to deliver a service that responds to care leavers' needs for support as they trace their records and families.

Community Services

Settlement of unaccompanied humanitarian minors

Ministers discussed issues related to the management of Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors (UHM's), including guardianship for the current group of Afghan UHMs placed by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship. Ministers also discussed the provision of appropriate accommodation, care and support services.

Ministers agreed that the Community and Disability Services Ministers' Advisory Council and the Standing Committee on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs will work collaboratively on this issue.

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