

Mr David Bowen
CEO
National Disability Insurance Agency
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10 October 2016



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**Re.: NSW National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)
And Mental Health Experience: Request for Information and Data**

Dear Mr Bowen,

I am writing today at the request of a number of MHCC members to share with you, and with the aim to problem solve, concerns related to NDIS implementation in NSW. We seek to bring these concerns to your attention in the context of the forthcoming National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) 'NDIS and Mental Health Roundtable' event planned for Sydney on 2 November.

Specific concerns for the next three years 2016/19 relate to: 1) access to NDIS funded services and supports for some Commonwealth funded mental health program clients; and, 2) opportunities for other people with mental health issues to access the NDIS. MHCC also requests that the NDIA make available detailed de-identified NSW access data. This is for MHCC planning and change management purposes in support of our member organisations in their transition to the NDIS environment (ie, the psychosocial disability support service 'market').

NDIS access for NSW Commonwealth funded mental health program clients

MHCC member organisations have concerns about the NDIS transition of mental health program clients. Partners in Recovery (PIR) and Day to Day Living Program 2016/17 contracts have ambitious targets for client transition to the NDIS linked to funding reductions. Funding available makes it unlikely to meet targets. Government provided 2015/16 contract extensions to the end of September for Personal Helpers and Mentors (PHaMS) and Mental Health Carer Respite programs. The later program providers recently received a letter outlining funding reductions with no targets for client NDIS transitions included. The viability of all these programs is now threatened along with the organisations that deliver them.

More than 14,000 people currently benefiting from Commonwealth mental health programs in NSW, their families and carers, and organisations/workers that currently support them are impacted.¹ Funding reductions will necessitate both service delivery and staff reductions by organisations delivering programs and increase the risk of clients becoming acutely unwell. This will increase demand for both public and primary health mental health treatment services, including demand for hospital based care.

Governments have committed to ensuring people with disability who are currently receiving services are not disadvantaged in the transition to the NDIS. Transition planning including continuity of support arrangements for Commonwealth funded mental health program clients in NSW needs clarity.

Other access to the NDIS for new entrants with psychosocial disability

The focus of NSW NDIS implementation is on the transition of Department of Family and Community Services Ageing, Disability and Homecare (ADHC) clients. This is because the NSW government plans to close ADHC by July 2018. This situation discriminates against people with mental health conditions as ADHC have not historically funded psychosocial disability.

¹ In NSW there are about 7,000 PIR clients and 7,000 PHaMS clients. The numbers of other Commonwealth funded mental health program clients is unknown to MHCC.

The NSW NDIS Bilateral Agreement outlines the schedule/s for transitioning ADHC clients and also the number of new entrants to the NDIS for all disability types across NSW for the next three years. While the majority are transitioning ADHC clients there is scope for 57,000 non-ADHC funded new NDIS entrants over the next three years.

New entrants include Commonwealth funded mental health program clients. While the numbers of 2016/17 new entrants is modest they increase from 2017/18. Despite this the NDIA in NSW are strongly indicating that there will be little opportunity for new mental health clients to access the NDIS in NSW over the next few years. This situation is inhibiting NDIS access requests by people that are not Commonwealth funded mental health program clients with high levels of psychosocial disability who are urgently in need of services and supports.

Request for information and data

While acknowledging that NDIS implementation is still in its early stages, NSW psychosocial disability access information included in the NDIA quarterly reports is not sufficient for planning and change management purposes. This is a problem in a mental health reform environment where government focus in NSW is on the transition of ADHC clients. MHCC is concerned about a blockage in access to NDIS funded services and supports for people with mental health issues over the next three years unless people's experiences are better understood.

Given the three key areas of concern described MHCC respectfully request:

- Clarification of the government's plan for continuity of support arrangements for Commonwealth funded mental health program clients in NSW as a matter of urgency
- Clarification of the NDIA's NSW capacity and process to consider access requests of people with very high levels of psychosocial disability that are not Commonwealth funded mental health program clients between July 2016 and June 2019
- Access to trail site and implementation routine quarterly and annual de-identified data about NSW psychosocial disability NDIS access (ie, total accessing, total accessing with plans, withdrawn access requests including Commonwealth clients choosing not to apply. This information is required both for NSW and other local community catchments (ie, Local Health District and/or Primary Health Network).

Thank you for your consideration of these matters. I hope for the opportunity to speak further with the NDIA prior to 2 November and to better understand the aims of the 2 November event with particular reference to community sector providers supporting people with mental health conditions including psychosocial disability.

Please don't hesitate to contact me should you require further information.

Kind regards,



Jenna Bateman
Chief Executive Officer
Mental Health Coordinating Council

Cc: The Hon. Pru Goward MP, NSW Minister for Mental Health; The Hon. John Ajaka MLC, NSW Minister for Disability Services; The Hon. Sussan Ley MP, Commonwealth Minister for Health; The Hon. Christian Porter MP, Commonwealth Minister for Social Services