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NDIS NEEDS BIPARTISAN SUPPORT

AMA Position Statement on the National Disability Insurance Scheme 2018

The AMA has called for bipartisan commitment to fund the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) to ensure its continuing viability, and to ensure all eligible participants receive appropriate supports.

Releasing the *AMA Position Statement on National Disability Insurance Scheme 2018*, AMA President, Dr Michael Gannon, said that the NDIS is one of the most significant reforms in the history of Australian health care, but that its future must be guaranteed.

“The AMA acknowledges that the NDIS is not yet completely operational, and that it has encountered a number of operational and budgetary obstacles,” Dr Gannon said.

“The AMA recognises the need to balance reasonable criticisms of the NDIS without undermining either confidence in, or the integrity of, the scheme.

“The AMA supports the recommendations made by the Productivity Commission and the Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS. These recommendations must be implemented as a matter of urgency.

“NDIS planners must be appropriately qualified to work respectfully with NDIS participants, their carers, and medical professionals, and have a sufficient level of disability knowledge to carry out their roles and responsibilities.

“It is critical that NDIS planners respect diagnoses and reports from medical professionals.

“Under no circumstances should a non-medically qualified NDIS planner or assessor disregard medical assessments by treating health professionals.

“Medical professionals must be provided with accurate, unambiguous material detailing exactly what medical information, including diagnosis and treatments, is required for NDIS assessments.”

The Position Statement also calls for people in custodial settings who meet NDIS eligibility requirements to be able to access NDIS packages, and for Indigenous housing to be treated as a priority within the NDIS.

“Housing shortages, overcrowding, and lack of access to basic services such as potable water, electricity, and sanitation all compound the adverse health impacts of disabilities,” Dr Gannon said.

“There is no word for ‘disability’ in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, and it is not a widely recognised concept in indigenous culture. This can make it difficult for people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to engage with disability support schemes.”

Dr Gannon also said that it was vital to get the right balance of support between traditional medical mental health treatment and psychosocial supports for both those eligible for the NDIS, and those not eligible.

“Appropriate NDIS packages should be available for all eligible Australians with permanent psychiatric impairment resulting in substantially reduced capacity,” Dr Gannon said.

“It should not matter how that permanent impairment is acquired. Acquired brain injury, including drug and alcohol-related brain injury, or Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), should not be grounds for ineligibility.

“The condition is what makes a person eligible for an NDIS package, regardless of how it may have been caused.”

The AMA *Position Statement on the National Disability Insurance Scheme 2018* is at <https://ama.com.au/position-statement/national-disability-insurance-scheme-2018>

Background

- The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) provides funding packages for people under the age of 65 who have a permanent impairment that substantially reduces physical, intellectual, cognitive, neurological, psychological, sensory, and/or social functioning.
- The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) is an independent statutory body whose role is to implement the NDIS, and whose function is to assign funding to individuals.
- An estimated 4.3 million Australians aged 16-65 have a disability, but the majority will not qualify for NDIS-funded packages.
- Approximately 460,000 people will participate in the NDIS across Australia by 2020.
- People with a disability who do not meet the NDIS eligibility requirements will continue to rely on services provided by State and Territory Governments.
- NDIS funding is available for “reasonable and necessary supports” for people with a disability to live a life as “ordinary” as possible.
- Funding covers aids and equipment such as wheelchairs and hearing aids, personal care help, financial management, house cleaning, transport, social participation activities, as well as physiotherapy, psychological, social, and speech therapy.

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