



AASW

**Australian Association
of Social Workers**

*Submission to the National
Disability Insurance Scheme*

*Information, Linkages, & Capacity
Building, (ILC) Policy Framework*

March 2015

© Australian Association of Social Workers
National Office – Canberra
Unit 9, Block C
Trevor Pearcey House
28-34 Thynne Street
BRUCE ACT 2617
T 02 6232 3900
F 02 6230 4399
E advocacy@asw.asn.au www.asw.asn.au

Enquiries regarding this submission can be directed to:
Senior Manager, Policy & Advocacy: Stephen Brand

Email: stephen.brand@asw.asn.au

Phone: 02 6232 3900

AASW Chief Executive Officer:

Glenys Wilkinson

Email: ceo@asw.asn.au

Introduction

The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) is pleased to provide the following submission to the NDIS based on the consultation paper describing the 'Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Policy'.

The AASW is the body which regulates and represents the profession of social work in Australia with over 8000 members. Many professional social workers work in the disability sector and possess valuable skills, knowledge and experience in service provision. This new policy is a welcome addition to the NDIS landscape and the AASW believes that the profession will contribute strongly to this new area of practice.

The submission takes the form of responding to the set questions in the format as provided by the NDIS.

Link to document - <http://www.ndis.gov.au/document/1421>

1. What are the most important elements of ILC?

The ILC policy framework has many important elements. In particular we applaud the following features in the ILC policy framework:

- i. The systemic perspective that will potentially integrate formal and informal as well as disability and mainstream supports.
- ii. The investment in community education, broad-based interventions and capacity building to sustain and strengthen informal support, and promote the social and economic inclusion of people with disability.
- iii. The inclusion of healthcare, education, transport and housing when considering people's wellbeing.
- iv. Having Local Area Coordinators (LACs) in a pivotal role to provide information and support to all people with a disability; and to liaise with the community to promote systemic change that will facilitate community access and inclusion of people with disability.

2. What is missing?

At this early stage implementation strategies and details are missing from the ILC policy framework. Hopefully this consultation will assist in their development.

One area needing particular attention is clarification of the LAC role. As a member based organisation and professional representative for social workers we are acutely

aware of the demands of the LAC role as it is outlined in the ILC policy framework and the *National Disability Insurance Scheme Quality and Safeguarding Framework* discussion paper.

The skills and knowledge required by LACs correspond closely with the capabilities developed in social work courses. We have a deep appreciation of the breadth and depth of capabilities required to effectively fill this role. We respectfully suggest to the Department of Social Services that they do not underestimate the demands inherent in this role and the skills and expertise needed. The LAC role is pivotal to the success of the NDIS. The other four *Streams* described in the ILC policy framework will depend on the LACs to a considerable degree, these being i) Information, Linkages and Referrals; ii) Capacity building for mainstream services; iii) Community awareness and capacity building; and iv) Individual capacity building. The competence and effectiveness of the LACs will have a significant impact on the outcomes achieved by people with disability and the success of the NDIS.

Similarly, planners and assessors are also critical to success and they need high levels of skills, knowledge and competence. From our contact with people who have worked with NDIS planners and assessors to date, we have gained the impression that the capabilities needed in this role have been underestimated.

While the detail is not yet clear, the one-off, low level or episodic supports contemplated under *Individual Capacity Building* may not be sufficient if their scope is limited to preventative intervention. Some people, particularly those with mental health conditions or cognitive disabilities who do not qualify for *Individual Funded Packages*, may still have short term periodic need for the types of supports funded under packages because of the episodic nature of their conditions. The criteria for the types of services funded under ILC need to be sufficiently flexible to cater for a wide range of needs.

3. How will we know the ILC streams are meeting their objectives/vision?

We will know if the ILC and other NDIS streams are meeting their objectives if relevant data are collected to make these assessments. It is important that consistent data be collected for people receiving all NDIS support so that a comprehensive understanding is gained.

As much as possible, consistent data should be collected for people receiving *Individual Funded Packages* in 'Tier 3' and those receiving ILC support. This data needs to include quantitative and qualitative input, process and outcome measures and include financial details.

There are three ways this data can be collected. One strategy is to ensure the data collection from standard NDIA record keeping is fully utilised. A second strategy is to identify what data is currently missing or ineffectively collected and revise standard data collection methods accordingly. While having many variables complicates data

analysis, much can be learnt from appropriate statistical analysis using a large data base. The third data collection strategy is to conduct longitudinal studies. These studies need to involve people with disability in their design, have a rigorous methodology including quantitative and qualitative measures and examine all outcomes.

4. What would be the implementation challenges?

While the ILC policy framework is built upon sound principles and goals, there will be numerous challenges in implementing the vision outlined. Fundamental to its successful implementation will be:

- i. Recognising and utilising existing good practice and expertise.
- ii. Designing and implementing coherent and simple structures for both consumers and providers which streamline functions and integrate all relevant systems.
- iii. Ensuring appropriate arrangements and levels of funding when ILC is out-sourced.
- iv. Recruiting personnel with the necessary skills, knowledge and competence.
- v. Changing attitudes and the culture within much of the disability sector, which has been paternalistic for a long time, to one that promotes human rights, choice and autonomy.
- vi. Changing attitudes and the culture within the community and mainstream services to include people with disability.
- vii. Ensuring that people with disability have sufficient funds to implement the broad vision the ILC policy framework contains.
- viii. Ensuring that state governments maintain their commitment to access and inclusion into mainstream services after the major operational and policy responsibility for disability shifts to the Commonwealth as outlined under the *National Disability Strategy*.

5. Which aspects of a person's life do you think ILC could have the greatest impact on?

Judging by the evidence gathered to date in the NDIS and other individual funding programs, the ILC will hopefully give people with disability wider choices and more opportunities. Considering the diversity among people with disability, they are likely to choose a vast array of lifestyles. One measure by which the ILC can be judged, is the number of new options available to people.

6. What are some of the principles that should guide investment across ILC streams?

The underpinning principles of the ILC should be those outlined in the NDIS Act (2013), especially human rights, choice, control and social participation.

Implementation principles to achieve these principles should be efficiency and effectiveness, being mindful not to sacrifice these principles by short-sighted and ineffective cost cutting. Implementation should recognise and fund existing expertise; outsource roles from NDIA as the general rule; create seamless service access; and ensure transparent accountability.

7. How do you see the interface between ILC functions and activities and the interaction with the mainstream service system? (housing, education, employment, health, family, accessibility and transport)

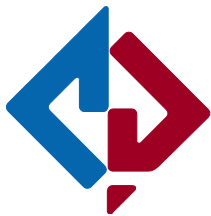
It is important that these interfaces be client-centred and seamless for the user and the provider. Historically the different service systems have operated as disconnected silos and this will be difficult to change. The NDIS will have additional challenges because numerous federal, state and local government departments will be involved.

The LACs will have an important role in initiating formal relationships and working to integrate services across these bureaucracies and the community. However, it is unrealistic to expect LACs to achieve the organisational, cultural and process changes required. The AASW recommends that a formal policy of agreements (perhaps in the form of formal MOUs) be established between the key governments departments based on principles of 'client need' not on different service delivery process. These agreements need to ensure a continuing commitment by all levels of government to expanded access and inclusion strategies in relation to their mainstream services, consistent with their commitments under the *National Disability Strategy*. It is vital to the success of the NDIS that community participation and inclusion by people with disability be achieved. These formal agreements need to be driven from senior levels and supported from the Ministers down. Clear leadership and strenuous efforts at the highest levels will be needed to overcome the tendency of bureaucracies to become inward looking and isolated.

Submitted for and on behalf of the Australian Association of Social workers Ltd

Glenys Wilkinson

Chief Executive Officer



AASW

.....
**Australian Association
of Social Workers**

T 02 6232 3900
F 02 6230 4399
E ceo@asw.asn.au

National Office

Unit 9, Block C Trevor Pearcey House
28-34 Thynne Street Bruce ACT 2617

Postal Address

PO Box 4956, Kingston ACT 2604

Incorporated in the ACT

ACN 008 576 010 / ABN 93 008 576 010