

# OPTIMISING SUPPORT FOR PSYCHOSOCIAL DISABILITY

## Project overview

Mental Health Australia is managing an exciting project which aims to develop alternative ways to provide support for NDIS participants with psychosocial disability than those currently on offer at this stage of NDIS rollout. Over the coming months, Mental Health Australia will be working with consumers, carers and other experts through a Delphi process to refine a set of alternative typical support packages. The starting point will be existing evidence, including empirical service use and outcomes data held by providers. The project is expected to be completed by the end of August 2018.

### Who is involved?

Aftercare, Flourish Australia, Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia, Mind Australia, Neami National, New Horizons, Star Health and Wellways provide significant support in the form of service level data, expertise in service delivery, funding for the project, and providing direction to the project and managing it to its conclusion (the project partners).

Consumers and carers are involved in overseeing the management of the project and providing lived experience expertise to the development of the list of psychosocial support services and the typical support packages.

Mental Health Australia is managing the project under a service agreement with the project partners. David McGrath Consulting has been subcontracted to design the project methodology and to undertake the data collection, aggregation and analysis, and to present the material for expert analysis and opinion. David was heavily involved in the development of the National Mental Health Service Planning Framework. He has extensive experience within and outside government mapping, planning and developing service systems.

The National Mental Health Commission has provided a grant to Mental Health Australia to support the project.



## Objectives

The specific objectives of the project are to:

- Reorient the planning of supports for National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants with psychosocial disability away from a welfare-oriented model and towards a recovery-oriented, investment-driven approach
- Produce one or more alternative typical support packages, with strong links to outcome-based evidence where possible, for the NDIA Actuary to integrate into the NDIA's reference package process for participants with psychosocial disability
- Provide an economic rationale for investment at the individual and population levels to drive changes in the NDIA's approach to psychosocial disability, underpinned by high-quality, recovery-oriented services which seek to maximise social and economic participation wherever possible.

By aggregating and analysing existing service level data from providers, two major products will provide an alternative set of policy and procedural reference points for the NDIS which better reflect the needs of participants with psychosocial disability:

1. A list of optimal psychosocial services
2. Appropriate aggregation of these services into typical support packages.

## Background

For some time it has been apparent that the NDIA's approach to planning is not fully reflecting the needs of people with psychosocial disability. Further, psychosocial support providers are struggling to deliver a recovery-oriented service under the prices on offer through the NDIS. Providers report having to adopt workarounds in response to current arrangements, with common misunderstandings about what support item descriptions are intended to mean for this cohort.

With the combination of poorly designed plans and pricing arrangements which do not recognise the range of input costs required to deliver a quality service, there is an opportunity for collaboration within the mental health sector to exert influence over the NDIA's approach to planning and pricing services for people with psychosocial disability. Without such collaboration, and concerted advocacy building on it, there is a risk the NDIA will continue operating in a paradigm designed around other disability types.

## Governance

The Governance arrangements provide a mix of project management and expert input. (see Governance diagram)



### **The Project Management Group.**

The Project Management Group oversees and provides direction on the progress of the project. It comprises representatives from each project partner, a consumer representative and carer representative.

### **The Project Expert Group.**

The Project Expert Group is responsible for finalising the list of services, developing the typical support packages and making recommendations to the Project Management Group. Its members includes experts nominated by project partners, but acting as individual experts, consumer and carer representatives, a psychiatrist and a disability academic.

### **Lived Experience Group.**

In addition to the consumer and carer representatives on the Project Management Group and Project Expert Groups, the Lived Experience Group will review and provide opinion and advice to the Project Expert Group on the list of service elements it develops and to the Project Management Group on the final advice presented by the Project Expert Group.

## **Engagement with the mental health sector**

As the project progresses, more information will be provided to the sector about the project and opportunities to be engaged with its progress and advocacy as the findings of the project become available.

In the meantime, Mental Health Australia encourages members and others to get in touch with any ideas for how your organisation might help advocate for this important endeavour. Please contact [ndis@mhaustralia.org](mailto:ndis@mhaustralia.org)

## **Outcomes**

There are many benefits which could arise from the project:

### **For people with psychosocial disability**

- NDIS plans that can be implemented in ways which are consistent with individual needs much more effectively than at present
- Access to more intensive NDIS-funded support, based on a person-centred approach, particularly in the first one to three years of a plan
- Greater capability to participate in the community in the medium to long term, and even to exit the NDIS either temporarily or permanently, as a result of the supports received through the NDIS.



### For providers

- The capacity and flexibility to deliver person-centred, recovery-oriented NDIS-funded services to participants with psychosocial disability which maximise individual capability in the medium to long term
- Better alignment between the fundamental principles of the NDIS and the manner in which psychosocial support providers are able to deliver services to consumers
- Stronger therapeutic relationships between individual members of the workforce and individual consumers and carers
- Growth in the aggregate capacity of the supply side of the market for high-quality psychosocial support, consistent with the need for a doubling in the availability of services for this cohort.

### For government and the community

- More effective and efficient use of taxpayer investments in disability support services, especially from a lifetime perspective
- Much lower utilisation of NDIS-funded services that participants don't value
- The ability to refine and test a new, evidence-based and expert-informed approach with near to real-time data as the Scheme matures
- Greater economic participation and less reliance on welfare by this cohort in the medium to long term as a result of investment-driven NDIS-funded support
- Increased ability for the NDIA to redirect investment within its \$22 billion envelope in the interests of people with psychosocial disability (e.g. filling data gaps, assertive outreach, stigma reduction).

