

NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Framework consultation report released

The Department of Social Services recently released their consultation report on the NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Framework. The Framework aims to create a national approach to quality and safeguarding to ensure consistency in disability services across states and territories. The new National Framework will replace current measures managed through State-based legislation and funding agreements.

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) made a written submission and attended a consultation hosted by the Department as part of this process.

FECCA made a number of recommendations about the provision of information about the NDIS, rights of parties, and relevant laws and regulations with emphasis on culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. The consultation report acknowledged there was a requirement for culturally appropriate and sensitive information, and a necessity to make available a range of basic to more comprehensive information, depending on need. The report also discussed the need for strategies to reach CALD communities through active engagement and specific targeted campaigns, including engaging and working with communities and the use of community radio.

FECCA has consistently raised concerns about the availability of choice for CALD consumers in the NDIS, and the need to ensure that the NDIS accreditation system for providers recognises the needs of CALD communities, including that they may have to find providers from their own communities to access appropriate services. The consultation report acknowledged general concerns about the difficulties of attracting and maintaining a skilled workforce. It also recognised particular concerns about building the market in regional and remote areas, on guaranteeing appropriate services for culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

In our submission, FECCA recommended establishing a robust vetting process for all support workers where the criminal history and capability/capacity to work with vulnerable groups of people are thoroughly assessed. When undertaking the process, consideration should be given to humanitarian entrants who may not be in a position to obtain police checks from previous countries of residence. Determination of their suitability in coordination with migration authorities may be considered in this regard. The consultation report notes the issues raised in relation to humanitarian entrants.

Finally, the consultation report highlighted CALD participants in the consultation process strongly supported the need to build the capacity of providers to ensure cultural competency, this included procuring some level of qualification.

Based on this consultation report, Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments will work together to prepare a Decision Regulation Impact Statement for consideration by Ministers in early 2016. FECCA will continue to monitor the implementation of the NDIS and engage with the Government to ensure that the needs of CALD people with disability are considered in policy-making.

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