

Queensland's human services system post NDIS – planning ahead to maximise the benefits for people with mental illness

Purpose

There are a variety of reform activities underway that will impact on the human services system for people experiencing mental health issues in Queensland, in particular the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The purpose of this paper is to explore some of the opportunities and risks presented by system change and lay the foundations for further conversation. Primarily, stakeholders seek to establish a collaborative approach between the relevant government agencies and the non-government sector in Queensland to ensure that people living with mental illness reap the maximum benefit from the NDIS and broader service system reforms.

It is proposed that a forum be hosted to enable key representatives from the Queensland and Australian governments, the National Disability Insurance Agency and the community sector to explore a common understanding of the pending introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and related reform processes. The aim is to discuss a common vision, seek clarity where possible about what the changes will mean and develop some strategies that will help ensure a smooth transition. In this conversation we hope to consider the needs of people experiencing mental health issues, who may currently receive services responding to health, disability and community-related needs. This includes people who will and people who won't be eligible for individual funding packages under the NDIS when it is implemented.

Background

Introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) will mean significant changes to Queensland's social services system and in particular how people access disability services.

Planning for the implementation of the NDIS in Queensland is at a critical juncture in terms of understanding its potential impact on people living with mental illness. The current design of the scheme is heavily focused on people with physical disabilities. The needs of people with psychosocial disability and the recovery-based principles upon which their support needs to be based introduces another level of complexity to implementation plans. There is an urgent need to give voice to the concerns of people with mental health issues, their carers, families and service providers who support them in planning for implementation. The recent Review of Mental Health Programmes and Services undertaken by the National Mental Health Commission also called for government to conduct detailed modelling on the interaction between clinical mental health supports, community supports and the NDIS (Rec 3; Vol 1 p.61).

Mental health and disability services in Queensland are funded, in the main, by the Queensland Department of Health, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, and the Federal Department of Social Services. These agencies will transfer all or part of their current funding to the NDIA. Vulnerable Queenslanders who require help for other social issues can also

access a range of supports funded by both the Queensland and Australian Governments to address issues including housing and homelessness, domestic and family violence, youth services, disability support services, supports for children and families, justice and health. The social service support system is complex, wide-ranging and can at times seem difficult to negotiate.

This is particularly true for people with mental health issues who have complex needs and require a multi-faceted and coordinated service system response across both health and social services. It has long been acknowledged that people with complex needs can fall through the cracks in service delivery – between national and jurisdictional service delivery, between government and non-government services, and between services delivered by different portfolio agencies. People with persistent complex needs are more likely to experience chronic health problems, particularly disability and mental illness. Support needs will often vary over time and be cyclic in nature.

For these reasons, it is important to consider changes to the human services system in an holistic way and consider the needs of people who will receive both Individual Funding Packages as well as those who will only be able to access support through the Information, Linkages and Coordination tier or the mainstream system.

Issues

NDIS transition in Queensland is in its early stages. Decisions are yet to be finalised about the particulars of the bi-lateral agreement for the delivery of the NDIS in Queensland. The bi-lateral agreement will make clear which current funding programs will transition to become part of the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) and what services will remain outside the NDIA and form part of the mainstream service system.

This means stakeholders cannot fully envisage how the NDIS will be implemented and how it will support them at this early stage.

Non-government organisations in the mental health sector, through NDIS trials in Victoria, Western Australia and New South Wales have identified important lessons about how those living with mental illness can access support and what the barriers may be.

The mental health sector is keen to start a strategic conversation about policy, design and implementation of new arrangements. This includes new arrangements for delivery of the NDIS and also new arrangements for mainstream service affected by the NDIS. Stakeholders see an opportunity to cooperate now for optimal effective planning to avoid less effective processes and structures becoming embedded later.

How can stakeholders influence transition arrangements?

In Queensland, the NDIS transition of State Government services and funding is being led by the Disability Services branch within the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services (DCCSDS). DCCSDS convene the Queensland Transition Advisory Group for NDIS implementation of which the Queensland Alliance for Mental Health (QAMH) is a member. As such, the QAMH represent service providers, consumers, service users, families and carers in discussion about the design of the NDIS.

It is not yet clear how these voices may also be considered in the planning for transition of the broader service system including mainstream services. There are a range of mechanisms currently

established to support reform processes at the national and state levels. These are listed in Attachment 1.

The Queensland Alliance for Mental Health has recognised their leadership role in this space. They will play a key role in leading change and representation of sector views as well as the views of consumers, service users, families and carers.

Stakeholder issues in the transition of the human services system

Resources to be available within the new NDIA will include both new funding and redirection of existing funding. So, elements of the current existing support system will only be available to people who are eligible for support within the NDIA. It is likely that there will be people who are not eligible for this type of support. They will rely on other elements of the system that will continue to be made available outside the NDIS (e.g. the mainstream system).

The NDIS service system involves assessors, community linkers, local area coordinators, therapists, case managers, providers, planners, support workers, brokers and many others – both from government and non-government parts of the community. It will be shaped by the rules and regulations that guide the work of its people, and the relationships that exist between the various parts of the system within and outside the NDIS and with other support systems such as health, community services, housing, homelessness support and education. There may be very few parts of the human services system that will remain static.

Stakeholders have provided feedback about a variety of questions that remain unanswered in relation to transition to the new system. Some of these unknowns will be resolved as part of transition activities. For other issues it is not clear how or when they may be resolved. The current proposal from stakeholders in the mental health and drug and alcohol sectors is that these issues be discussed earlier rather than later in order to enable appropriate consideration of responses that minimise disruption to human services and enable the confidence of consumers, service users, families and carers.

Key transition activities and stakeholder questions:

The following activities are incorporated into the DCCSDS transition plan. Each set of transition activities gives rise to questions and issues from stakeholders. These are listed below.

It is important to note that for many of these issues, clarity may emerge over time. It may be beneficial to identify where and how stakeholders may influence outcomes and how it will impact on people living with mental illness.

- **Bilateral Agreement is negotiated between the Queensland and the Australian Government including: planned intake of eligible participants, transfer of current clients, and the schedule of funding movements**
 - What service types/funding programs will be subsumed into the new NDIA?
 - What data is being used to inform the decision?
 - What service types/funding programs will remain as part of the mainstream system? How will eligibility for IFPs or ILC support affect demand for mainstream services?

- **Communication and engagement activities for people with disability, their family and carers and providers**
 - What can be communicated about support to be provided to people living with mental illness who are not assessed as having a permanent disability?
 - How will recovery principles be incorporated into supports for people living with severe and persistent mental illness?

- **Workshops for providers across the state, including in regional, rural and remote communities, to build awareness of the NDIS and how to prepare to operate in a new competitive market-driven disability services system. Targeted activities to support providers to prepare for the NDIS. Expand workforce development activities.**
 - How will workers be managed and protected as part of a system that is characterised by consumer choice and flexibility?
 - How will workplaces need to organise themselves to allow for greater flexibility while retaining capacity to offer a range of services?

- **Queensland Government departments develop NDIS transition plans. Project future accommodation needs of people with disability.**
 - How will consumers, families and carers be consulted about NDIS transition plans for mainstream services? How will plans progress to enable improvements to coordinated case management approaches across systems?
 - How will transition plans impact on the needs of other vulnerable people across the human service system? Will there be a greater demand placed on the mainstream systems that will impede the ability to respond through early intervention before people develop severe and persistent mental health issues?

- **Transition existing block funded arrangements, where practicable, to an individualised approach. Expand opportunities for people to have more choice and control over their disability services. Targeted activities to support people with disability, families and carers to prepare for the NDIS.**
 - Will there be a way for consumers and service users to maintain existing links and relationships with key support staff, while still adopting choice and control?

Moving forward

It is proposed that the Queensland Mental Health Commission host a strategic conversation to bring key stakeholders and leaders together to:

- Discuss stakeholder questions and reach a shared understanding of the nature and extent of the key concerns
- seek clarity about what the changes might mean to the existing supports for people living with mental illness including the disability support system and the mainstream human service system
- develop some strategies that will ensure people living with mental illness are enabled to reap the maximum benefit from changes to the human services system as a result of the NDIS

Following the workshop, the Queensland Alliance for Mental Health will take leadership and follow up on actions or themes emerging from the workshop, depending on the actions that emerge and their capacity to do so.

Attachment 1

Key Reform Initiatives and Stakeholder Consultation Mechanisms

NDIS Workshop - September 2015

Reform initiatives impacting on service systems for people experiencing mental health issues and problematic alcohol and other drug use

National

- NDIS - bilateral agreements and implementation
- Response to the National Mental Health Commission Review of Mental Health Services and Programs
- Fifth National Mental Health Plan
- National Ice Action Strategy
- Quality Framework for Australian Government Funded Drug and Alcohol Treatment Services

Queensland

- Social Investment Reform
 - o Human Services Quality Framework
- Disability Services – NDIS Implementation
- Child and Family Reform
- Queensland Health Services Plan
- Family Violence Prevention – Bryce Report

Key consultation mechanisms across jurisdictions

| Jurisdiction | Mechanism | Purpose | Participants |
|-----------------------|---|---|--|
| National NDIS Rollout | NDIA Mental Health Sector Reference Group Secretariat - NDIA | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- to establish a strong working partnership and communication mechanism between the Mental Health sector and the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA). The group is advisory only and not a decision making body.- to provide feedback and comment on the NDIA mental health work plan that outlines key strategic projects on mental health managed by NDIA. | National Mental Health consumer (2) and carer (1) forum Mental Health Commissioners (1) NDIA General Manager of Scheme Design (1) NDIA Operational Division Representative (1) NDIS Independent Advisory Council (2) Mental Health Australia (1) Community Mental Health Australia (1) Mental Health Drug and Alcohol Principal |

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| | | | Committee (2) Commonwealth Government, Department of Social Services (1), and Commonwealth Government, Department of Health (1) |
| Queensland Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services | Queensland NDIS Transition Advisory Group (QTAG) Secretariat - Disability Services | - to provide advice to the Minister for Disability Services on Queensland's transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). | Queensland Disability Advisory Council Queensland NDIS Champion NDS Queensland Queenslanders with Disability Network Carers Queensland Parent to Parent Qld Community Resource Unit Inc AMPARO Advocacy Inc Qld Alliance for Mental Health Centacare Montrose Access CPL Synapse Deaf Services Queensland AEIOU Foundation Community Services Industry Alliance |
| Queensland Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services | Disability Services Partnership Forum Secretariat - Disability Services | | Available from Queensland Disability Services |
| Queensland Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services | Community Services Partnership Forum Secretariat - Child and Family Services | The partnership forum provides an opportunity for the sector and stakeholders to work with the department to shape the future of community services in Queensland. The forum's focus is on services funded under the department's Community Services stream. | - Health and Community Services Workforce Council - Local Government Association of Queensland - Community Services Industry Alliance - Volunteering Qld - Queensland Council of Social Service |

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| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coalition of Community Boards - Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak - Ending Violence Against Women Queensland - Queensland Aids Council - Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland - Council on the Ageing Queensland |
| Queensland Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services | <p>Child and Family Reform Stakeholder Advisory Group</p> <p>Secretariat – Child and Family Services</p> | - The purpose of the group is to provide expert advice on the development, implementation and monitoring child and family reform policy and programs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kummara Association - Queensland Council of Social Services - Brave hearts - Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak - Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research - Queensland University of Technology - CREATE Foundation - Working Against Violence Support Service - Mission Australia - Foster Care Queensland - Churches of Christ Care Pathways Queensland - Micah Projects - PeakCare Queensland - Griffith University. |
| Queensland Department of Health | Services Plan Advisory Group (SPAG) | - to provide advice to Queensland Health in the development of the Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Services Plan. | Available from Queensland Department of Health |