



FECCA

Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia



**Disabled
People's
Organisations
Australia**

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24th February 2017

Mr David Bowen
CEO
National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)
email: david.bowen@ndis.gov.au

Dear Mr Bowen

We are writing on behalf of Disabled People's Organisations Australia (DPOA), the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) and the below signatory organisations to request a meeting time to discuss the important issue of interpreter funding for NDIS participants.

It has come to our attention that there has been a recent change in policy and practice around the funding of interpreters for NDIS participants from non-English speaking backgrounds.

It is our understanding that non-English speaking participants with disability are no longer able to access NDIS funding to purchase professional interpreting and translating services (unless the need is a result of a participant's disability). In agency correspondence, we have been informed that this came about because these supports can be accessed through other 'mainstream services'. We believe this is not the case.

We are deeply concerned about this decision and the subsequent impact it will have on non-English speaking NDIS participants, and their families. It is known that only a very narrow category of specialist organisations are eligible to access the Department of Social Services *Free Interpreting Service*, which is typically limited to organisations providing emergency services and case work (e.g. settlement support organisations, General Practitioners (GP's), Pharmacists and Real Estate agents).

NDIS registered service providers, on a whole, will be ineligible to access this free service. If non-English speaking people with disability - or NDIS service providers - do require language supports, then they will be required to pay fee-for-service rates through a language service provider such as the Department of Immigration and Border Protection's *Translating and Interpreting Service* (TIS National).

Considering that the NDIS is no longer including the cost of Language other than English (LOTE) interpreter supports in a participant's plan, and that both non-English speaking people with disability and NDIS registered service providers are generally ineligible to access the free interpreting services, we wish to highlight that this change in policy subsequently shifts nearly all translating and interpreting costs to people with disabilities, or their service providers.

We struggle to understand how this substantial cost, and need, will be met in this new individualised funding driven marketplace, and fear professional accredited interpreters will be underutilised and/or the sector will develop an inappropriate reliance on family members to act as interpreters (which raises separate concerns around independence and privacy).

We believe that this is a basic access and equity issue. Prohibiting translation and interpreting services from NDIS plans directly silences the voice of non-English speaking participants and their families: how can non-English speaking people with disability exercise choice and control or work towards their identified NDIS goals if they do not have access to everyday language supports for basic communication?

We are keen to work collaboratively with the NDIA to address this issue and seek an urgent meeting to discuss this matter.

Yours sincerely



Dwayne Cranfield
National Ethnic Disability Alliance
(on behalf of DPO Australia)



Dr Emma Campbell
Director
FECCA

This letter is endorsed by:

<p>Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities (ADEC)</p>	
<p>A.C.T Disability, Aged and Carer Advocacy Service Inc. (ADACAS)</p>	
<p>AMPARO Advocacy Inc</p>	
<p>Community Mental Health Australia (CMHA)</p>	
<p>Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA)</p>	
<p>Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA)</p>	
<p>Deaf Australia Inc.</p>	

<p>Deafness Forum of Australia</p>	
<p>Disability Rights and Advocacy Service (DRAS)</p>	
<p>Diversity and Disability Alliance (DD Alliance)</p>	
<p>Ethnic Community Services Co-operative (ECSC)</p>	 <p>Ethnic Community Services Co-operative <i>A voice for diversity and inclusion</i> <small>(Formerly known as Ethnic Child Care, Family and Community Services Co-operative)</small></p>
<p>Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre (EDAC)</p>	 <p>EDAC Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre</p>
<p>First Peoples Disability Network Australia (FPDN)</p>	
<p>Mental Health Australia (MHA)</p>	<p>Mental Health Australia</p>
<p>Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of NSW (MDAA)</p>	

<p>National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA)</p>	
<p>Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA)</p>	
<p>Settlement Services International (SSI)</p>	
<p>The Advocacy and Support Centre (TASC)</p>	
<p>People with Disability Australia Inc. (PWDA)</p>	
<p>People with Disabilities ACT (PWD ACT)</p>	
<p>Women with Disabilities Australia (WWDA)</p>	