



# MIFA Opening Statement

Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs

Public Hearing

**Inquiry:** National Disability Insurance Scheme Amendment (Participant Service Guarantee and Other Measures) Bill 2021

**MIFA Representative:** Tony Stevenson, National Chief Executive Officer

**Date:** Friday 12 November 2021

## Opening Statement

Good afternoon everyone. My name is Tony Stevenson and I am the National CEO of Mental Illness Fellowship Australia (MIFA). I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. I pay my respects to them and their cultures and to the elders past and present. I also acknowledge the expertise of people, families and carers with living experience of mental health conditions.

I thank the Senate Standing Committee for the opportunity to appear as a witness today to amplify the voices of people living with severe and complex mental health conditions in Australia.

To start, I welcome the NDIS Amendment Bill and the changes this will make for people living with psychosocial disability. MIFA is pleased to see that many of the proposed changes aim to implement the recommendations of the Tune Review 2019.

Today, my comments pertain to the sections of the Bill that relate to psychosocial disability. Overall, MIFA is pleased that the proposed legislative changes are an improvement on the current NDIS Act. However, I urge this Committee to consider that further work needs to be done to establish agreed guidelines around the interpretation and implementation of the legislation. It is critical that the legislation can be interpreted consistently and applied appropriately for the benefit of people with psychosocial disability. There must be clarity for NDIA employees, healthcare providers and those working within the health care and mental health care sectors to support better NDIS participant experiences right from the very beginning and reduce disengagement from the NDIS pathway.

Some of the proposed new wording and phrases in section 24 of the legislation will require further clarification to achieve this. We have outlined the ambiguous phrases in our submission.

The second issue that I want to emphasise today is the lack of any reference to recovery or the NDIS Psychosocial Disability Recovery-Oriented Framework in the Bill or in the Explanatory Statement. The NDIA has been working with the sector to develop and implement this NDIS Recovery Framework to enable recovery-oriented practice that can support better outcomes,

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choice and control for NDIS participants with psychosocial disability. The recovery approach has long been a cornerstone of the services provided by community mental health organisations and the development of an NDIS Recovery Framework is a positive and much needed step. However, this critical piece of work is not mentioned in the Bill, nor can we see any reference to the Recovery Framework in the Rules (which have not yet been made available).

As a minimum, we recommend that the Committee consider how the NDIS Psychosocial Disability Recovery-Oriented Framework can be appropriately included or referred to in the NDIS Amendment Bill or the accompanying Rules or Operational Guidelines. It is important that the NDIS Recovery Framework directs the implementation of the Participant Service Guarantee for people with psychosocial disability.

Again, I thank the Committee for the opportunity to appear today.

## Contact

Tony Stevenson – National Chief Executive Officer, MIFA

m. 0400 555 433

e. [tony.stevenson@mifa.org.au](mailto:tony.stevenson@mifa.org.au)