



National Ethnic Disability Alliance

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Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
Inclusion and Professional Support Program

Delivered to: IPSP.Feedback@deewr.gov.au

Thursday, 21 July 2011

NEDA Submission: Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP)

Dear DEEWR,

The National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA) is the national peak organization representing the rights and interests of people from non-English speaking background (NESB) with disability, their families and carers throughout Australia. NEDA is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) to provide policy advice to the Australian Government and other agencies on national issues affecting people from NESB with disability, their families and carers.

NEDA actively promotes the equal participation of people from NESB with disability in all aspects of Australian society. It manages a range of projects relating to NESB and disability communities and works closely with its state and territory members to ensure that its policy advice reflects the lived experiences of people from NESB with disability. In states and territories where no NESB-disability advocacy agency exists NEDA undertakes development work to establish a structure that can support people from NESB with disability, their families and carers.

This submission is based on consolidated knowledge and research work conducted by NEDA over the past fifteen years. We believe that the points raised in this submission are critical for access and inclusion of children from NESB with disability as part of the IPSP.

We hope that you will give favourable attention to the recommendations.

If further information is required on this submission, please contact me on 0407 878 933 or email to office@neda.org.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sibylle Kaczorek', written in a cursive style.

Sibylle Kaczorek
Executive Officer

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1. Introduction

NEDA welcomes the opportunity to comment on the discussion paper of the Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP).

NEDA commends DEEWR on the identification of children from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) background, including refugees and humanitarian intervention background and children with disability as part of the groups with additional needs.

The points raised in this submission are directly relating to these groups of children.

There is very little study into the lives of people and children from NESB with disability. There is significant lack of data on people from NESB with disability in general. However, the under utilisation of services by people born in a non English speaking country with disability is widely reported through the Productivity Commission's annual Report on Government Services.

Based on the reporting of the Productivity Commission on Government Services¹ in 2008-2009 Australian residents and citizens from NESB with disability demonstrate a significantly lower uptake of services. People born in a Non English Speaking Country were approximately 2-4 times less likely to receive support services than people born in English Speaking Countries.

1.1 About NEDA

The National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA) is the national peak organisation representing the rights and interests of people from non-English speaking background (NESB) with disability, their families and carers throughout Australia. NEDA is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FACCSIA) to provide policy advice to the Australian Government and other agencies on national issues affecting people from NESB with disability, their families and carers.

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In states and territories where no NESB disability advocacy agency exists NEDA undertakes development work to establish a structure that can support people from NESB with disability, their families and carers.

1.2 Defining NESB and Disability

NEDA uses the term Non English Speaking Background in preference to Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Background as those from an English speaking background are encompassed by the latter term and they are not part of NEDA's constituency. NEDA contends that coming from a linguistic and cultural background other than Anglo-Australian can be a great social barrier and a source of discrimination in Australia. The intention of using NESB is not to define people by what they are not but to highlight the inequity people experience due to linguistic and cultural differences.

NEDA also uses the term people from NESB with disability rather than people with disability from NESB as we consider cultural background (not disability) an appropriate means of developing social identity.

¹ <http://www.pc.gov.au/gsp/reports/rogs/2011>

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NEDA maintains that disability is a social construct and arises when a society's infrastructure is not developed to ensure all individuals, regardless of capacity or impairment, can fully participate in society. Thus NEDA refers to people with disability rather than people with disabilities to underline that disability is not a characteristic of an individual but a consequence of a society designed (whether consciously or inadvertently) to exclude many of its citizens from equal participation.

However, with more inclusive program design and monitoring, NEDA believes that social inclusion for people from NESB with disability is possible.

NEDA estimates that people from NESB with disability comprise 1 in 20 Australians, or approximately 1 million people. This estimation was based on the assumption that one in every four Australians with disability is a person of either first or second generation NESB. According to the broad finding from the Survey on Disability and Aged Care (SDAC), there are approximately 4 million people with disability in Australia.

2 Towards inclusion and equity of access for children from NESB with disability

NEDA commends DEEWR on the integration of the Bicultural Support Program as part of the IPSP.

However, we wish to raise a number of questions and consequent recommendations.

Anecdotally, NEDA is aware that at times services are not available unless the 'right' questions are asked by the consumer, in this case parents of children from NESB or parents of children with disability or parents of children from NESB with disability.

It is of critical importance thus that information in key community languages is available at the services that explain any options of support. It needs to be highlighted here that the consumer group as just described is often highly grateful for simply having their child booked into a service. These consumers will not ask for any 'additional' assistance unless clearly accessible information and permission to do so is available and understood. This is part of cultural competence and understanding that is not reflected in the IPSP.

In addition, it is NEDA knowledge across all states and territories that despite services budgeting for interpreting and translating costs, these are often compromised on when budgets get tough. The Australian Government recently took the insightful decision to provide free translation and interpreting services to older Australians in aged care facilities. The same rationale applies to children and their parents in child care services.

Recommendation 1:

To make free translation and interpreting services available to all child care services to guarantee equitable access to information and communication.

It is not clear to NEDA what data is collected on children as it relates to ethnicity.

The issue of data and statistics is very important as Governments rely on good data for policy decisions, program development and resource allocation. Unfortunately, all too often data on ethnicity is minimized to country-of-birth. Especially with respect to children who are born in Australia to parents born in a non English speaking country this creates a significant ignorance to culturally and linguistically critical issues.

Recommendation 2:

1) To ensure that child care services collect data on:

- Country of Birth of child and both parents/guardians
- Languages spoken and preferred language of communication for child and parents

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2) To commit to regular reporting on ethnicity, as identified above, for program utilization rates across services, across states and territories.

Finally, NEDA wishes to raise the issue of access to IPSP for children with disability of parents who are residing in Australia on temporary visas including 457 visas.

It is not clear to NEDA if unintentionally or due to ignorance some child care services may offer less support to children in such circumstances. This of course would compromise these children's human rights and clearly would not be intentional through the program design.

Recommendation 3:

To ensure that all child care services are educated on their obligation to ensure services under the IPSP are available to all children in their care without arbitrary distinction, including on visa categories.

3 Conclusion

The Inclusion and Professional Support Program offers a good opportunity to address under-utilisation of disability services by people from NESB with disability. This opportunity has the potential to go a long way towards improving the inclusion of children from NESB with disability.

NEDA is positive that with minor changes to the guidelines as proposed through the 3 recommendations stated in this submission, principles of the social inclusion agenda and the Australian multicultural policy can be embraced.