



First Peoples
Disability Network
Australia

Call to Action; Meeting the needs of Aboriginal People with Disability



About First Peoples Disability Network (Australia)

- At least 12 years of advocacy on unmet needs of Aboriginal people with disabilities
- *Telling It Like It Is 2004*
- *Community capacity building solutions articulated since 2008*
- Paper in February 2013 outlining risks of market failure for Aboriginal people with disabilities
- *10 Point Plan for the Successful Implementation of the NDIS in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities*
- *Productivity Commission Report outlined range of issues for issues for Aboriginal people with disabilities*
- *2015 Social Justice and Native Report*
- Chaired Committee to Establish new *Closing the Gap* target for disability
- 2014 National Disability Award for Advocacy and Rights Promotion



About First Peoples Disability Network (Australia)

- Appearances before UNCRPD, UNCAT, EMRIP & PFII
- Unique organisation globally
- Leading member of the Global Network of Indigenous People with Disabilities
- Member of the Indigenous Peak Organisations Group – Redfern Statement
- Appeared before a number of Parliamentary Committees ranging, from education, housing, access to justice, right to health.
- Regular presence in the national media including Indigenous media



Some Facts about disability in Aboriginal communities

- Anecdotally it was believed that the prevalence of disability was twice that of the non-Aboriginal population.
- Recently quantified as 50% of the Aboriginal population reporting a disability or long-term health condition. (2011 Census)
- The 2014-15 National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Social Survey concluded that 9.1% of all Aboriginal people have a severe or profound disability
- Conservative result given the lack of data on prevalence of psychological disability.
- Very little reference material on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people with disability.
- Many Aboriginal people do not recognise they have a disability or self-identify.



Some Facts about disability in Aboriginal communities

- Aboriginal people with disability are far more likely to:
 - acquire a disability due to a preventable health condition such as diabetes
 - experience multiple barriers to their meaningful participation in community life. Multiple layers of discrimination.
 - to be unemployed
 - to have withdrawn or not accessed an education at all
 - to have not accessed a service
- In Pitjantjatjara language there is no word for disability; acceptance as part of the human experience. (Arriotti Louis, *Social Construction of Anangu Disability*, The Australian Journal for Rural Health, Vol 7, Number 4, November 1999).
- Aboriginal people with disability are often supported within the family and community. When the family lives in a economically depressed state this can create added burden.
- The medical model of disability has had a profoundly negative impact on the lives of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people with disability.



Disability in Aboriginal Communities; Social factors

There are a number of social factors that contribute to the higher prevalence such as:

Lack of access to good quality healthcare (including health promotion and health prevention programs).

Lack of access to appropriate housing and urban infrastructure (including clean water and sanitation)

Greater exposure to violence and abuse.

The psycho-social impact of colonisation, dispossession from land.

Substance dependence.



The Lived Experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people with disability

- The prevalence of disability in Aboriginal communities. And the prevalence of particular types of disability.
- Undiagnosed disability
 - hearing impairment
 - mental illness
- The problem with identifying as having a disability
- Multiple layers of discrimination. Double and triple disadvantage.



The Lived Experience of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Island people with disability

- The denial of the most fundamental of human rights i.e, access to shelter, access to education, employment
- Aboriginal people with disability have different experiences depending on where they live and the availability of services.
- The failure of government and non-government service providers to meet the needs of Aboriginal people with disability.
- Very poor access to information. Concerted outreach approach required.
- Lack of awareness of special assistance and other beneficial social programs.
- Diversity of experiences; different jurisdictions at different levels of development with regard the development of the social movement of Indigenous people with disability.



10 Point Plan for the Implementation of the NDIS in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

1. **Recognise** that the vast majority of Aboriginal people with disability do not self-identify as people with disabilities;
2. **Awareness raising** via a concerted outreach approach;
3. **NDIS Implementation workshops;**
4. **Build the capacity of the disability service system** to be responsive in a culturally appropriate way;
5. **Research**
6. **Recognise** that there already exists a workforce;
7. **Recognise** that its not always about services;
8. **Recruitment** of more Aboriginal people into the disability sector;
9. **Build the capacity of the social movement of Aboriginal people with disabilities;**
10. **Aboriginal Launch sites**



Call to Action

- Prioritise appropriate research
- Establish an understanding of the Aboriginal 'market' including reliable prevalence data
- Implement the *10 Point Plan*
- Aboriginal specific LAC/Community Connectors
- Scale up to 3000 Aboriginal LAC's/Community Connectors (based on the LAC Melbourne Metro version of LAC which has been tendered)
- Quarantine the Aboriginal share of the NDIS (at least \$1.6 billion dollars)
- PM&C to take a leading government role. Best placed with Indigenous Affairs rather than a new market drive disability framework.
- Indigenous Advancement Strategy



Call to Action

- Workforce strategy;
- Develop cooperatives potentially
- Community and individual capacity building
- NDIS is potentially positive major contributor for other social issues such as employment, incarceration etc.
- We need urgent action now to address the extraordinary level of unmet need
- Stand alone National Strategy for Aboriginal people with disability