



# First Peoples Disability Network Australia

---

The Redfern Statement  
DISABILITY WORKSHOP COMMUNIQUE

---

2 May 2017



## **The Redfern Statement Disability Workshop Communiqué**

### **Sydney**

On 2 May 2017 the first of the Redfern Statement alliance workshops was held on the land of the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation. We were welcomed to Gadigal land by Ms Yvonne Weldon. We acknowledged the traditional owners of the Gadigal lands, and paid our respects to Elders past and present.

The Redfern Statement workshop was hosted by the First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN), the peak organisation of and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability, in collaboration with The National Congress of Australia's First Peoples.

Community Elders and representatives from First Nations and Disability peak organisations participated, including representatives of First Peoples community controlled health, justice, housing, family violence, and community service organisations, alongside representatives from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Department of Social Services and other key government agencies involved in setting Australian government disability policy.

Senator the Hon. Nigel Scullion, Minister for Indigenous Affairs was unable to attend but provided a statement of support, describing the workshop as “an important step in our genuine and ongoing discussion to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on real practical solutions”. The full statement was read to attendees by Uncle John Baxter during the morning session.

The Hon. Jane Prentice MP, Assistant Minister for Social Services and Disability Services, attended the afternoon session and discussed the outcomes with participants. We welcomed the opportunity to provide the Assistant Minister with an overview of the major themes, issues, and priorities that emerged throughout the workshop.

### **Background**

In June 2016, in the lead up to the Federal Election Campaign, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders from health, justice, children and families, disability, and family violence prevention sectors united to call upon Australia's political leaders to recognise the aggravated disadvantage of Australia's First Peoples, and the fundamental role of Australia's First Peoples and their community-controlled organisations in solving the root causes of this disadvantage, known as the The Redfern Statement.

The Redfern Statement calls for changes across these sectors through structured engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and is supported by more than 30 major mainstream organisations. The disability workshop is one of five workshops that will be conducted this year. The relevant sector peak organisation will collaborate with the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples to produce the remaining workshops. Each workshop will focus on a particular service sector.

This Workshop was convened with the financial support of the Australian Government to enable us to deliver on the promise of The Redfern Statement – to articulate the solutions to the disadvantage experienced by our people with disability and our role in overcoming this

disadvantage. The workshop also responds to the Government's commitment in the National Disability Strategy 2010-2020 (the Strategy) Second Implementation Plan: Driving Action 2015-2018 to hold an annual solutions-focussed workshop focussed on improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability.

### **Key issues and concerns**

During our discussions we identified the following key issues and concerns:

- The prevalence of disability among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population groups is substantially higher than that for the general population. The best available data would suggest it is at least twice that of non-Aboriginal population groups.
- There are at least 60,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders across Australia who live with a severe or profound disability and who thus are part of the core target group for the National Disability Insurance Scheme.
- The disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders with disability and their families is intersectional. It arises because of the systemic barriers they face as a person who is both Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander AND a person with disability. Intersectionality compounds the disadvantage, in that the systemic barriers accumulate across a person's life. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders with disability are, for example, many times more likely than other Indigenous persons, and many more times likely than non-Indigenous persons to experience family violence, removal from their families, and to be in contact with and incarcerated in the criminal justice system.
- The effect of intersectionality on the health and social outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability can now be quantitatively demonstrated using data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).
- There is a serious problem of under-reporting of impairment and disability in mainstream service systems. Therefore, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders with disability do not always receive appropriate supports and opportunities, even in circumstances where these supports would be readily available.
- A major contributing factor in the under-reporting of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders with disability is the entrenched distrust of mainstream service systems within our communities, and the subsequent reluctance of our families and communities to engage with these systems out of fear that this will result in unwanted surveillance and intrusion, including the removal of our children from our families.
- Australia's First Peoples have a strong positive tradition of inclusion of persons with disability within our families and communities. We have never, and do not now, see our family and community members with disability as outsiders. This is a major source of strength. The inclusion of people with disability within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities can be demonstrated in the ABS data.
- We are capable of, and ready to do, the work that is necessary to overcome the disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders with disability. We call upon government and the wider Australian community and our governments to recognise and support our capabilities to do so.

### **Key priorities and strategies**

We also agreed as a collective to formulate a new national 10-point plan to address the unmet needs of our people with disability. The plan will be launched later in the year and the basis of this plan is:

1. The establishment and resourcing of an Aboriginal Community Controlled Disability Service Sector for the provision of disability supports by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability for their communities;
2. Address the systemic barriers facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in accessing the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS);
3. Prioritise early intervention to ensure supports and services are available over the long-term;
4. Recognise and acknowledge emerging skills and capacity within community;
5. Resource a community-directed research strategy which specifically focuses on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disability;
6. Peer to peer leadership; that is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability leading the engagement with community themselves;
7. Develop and implement an access to justice strategy for First People with disability, particularly those with cognitive impairment and intellectual disability;
8. Creating an inclusive education, employment and economic opportunity for Aboriginal people with disability as well as creating opportunities for employment for Aboriginal people more broadly in the disability sector;
9. Recognising that not all people with disability will be eligible for the NDIS, and ensuring that appropriate companion schemes and services are available and accessible for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over the long-term;
10. Develop strategies to address the detrimental effects upon the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability who experience the combined effects of racism and ableism.

In conclusion, we acknowledged that common goals, and respectful partnerships such as those within the Redfern Statement alliance and between FPDN and governments are key to achieving the outcomes outlined above. Together we must stay the course.

