



Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

## Media Release

### Community and Disability Services Ministers' Conference Communiqué

11/09/2009

The Community and Disability Services Ministers met in Canberra today to:

- Progress the substantial reform agenda for disability services; and
- Reaffirm their commitment to work together to reduce child abuse and neglect in Australia by endorsing the first implementation plan (2009-2012) for the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children.

#### Disability Services

##### *National Disability Agreement*

Ministers noted the significant progress made by all jurisdictions implementing key elements of the National Disability Agreement (NDA) and the \$100 million supported accommodation initiative to assist older carers.

Implementation of these initiatives in 2008-09 far exceeded targets, including:

- Providing around 150 additional supported accommodation places for people with disability, nearly half of the total number of places expected to be achieved by June 2012;
- More than 6,200 respite places were implemented, well above the target of 3,400 places; and
- Providing around 2,300 individual service packages and 1,260 intensive in-home places, well exceeding the targets of 1,600 and 780 places respectively.

Ministers further noted the progress made by each state and territory on moving young people from residential aged care, and preventing further young people from being placed in residential aged care, through the Young People with a Disability in Residential Aged Care Program.

Nationally, after 12 months of operation, more than 770 young people with disability have been assisted, including:

- 100 young people assisted out of residential aged care into more suitable accommodation; and
- More than 200 young people diverted from entering residential aged care.

Ministers also noted the implementation of the new Disability Employment Services, including uncapping places.

Ministers endorsed the Forward Work Plan for the NDA and agreed to the work schedule. Progress reports on the work plan will be presented at future Ministers' meetings.

Further to progress reform priorities under the NDA, Ministers:

- Endorsed the interim National Quality Framework for Disability Services, including revising the National Standards for Disability Services;
- Agreed to a national stocktake of current initiatives to help older carers and people with disability plan for the future. This will inform strategies to respond to the needs of older carers; and

- Agreed to further work on a Benchmarking Framework for Disability Services with population, service and outcome benchmarks to be phased in over time, subject to data availability.

Disability Ministers also agreed to the design of an Australian Disability Parking Permit to be rolled-out across Australia to 900,000 current permit holders and new applicants from 2010. The new permit design will also be referred to the Australian Transport Council for its agreement.

Disability Ministers will consider national minimum standards for parking concessions and eligibility criteria at their next meeting. Disability Ministers support a scheme where no existing permit holder will be worse off.

Further, Ministers agreed to provide \$10 million over five years to conduct research into disability to support the NDA. Ministers will develop a comprehensive research plan by their next meeting.

Ministers noted the breadth of innovative initiatives being delivered across jurisdictions, including:

- Initiatives in New South Wales through an Industry Development Fund to improve the effectiveness of the non-government sector and enhance service quality;
- The introduction of a new Community Living Strategy in Western Australia;
- Enhanced planning for individual support needs focusing on the use of informal, community and specialist disability services in South Australia, Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales;
- Streamlined intake and assessment processes to enhance access to early intervention services in Tasmania;
- The introduction in Queensland of legislation to ensure full community access for people with disability accompanied by a guide, hearing or assistance dog;
- In the Northern Territory shared care arrangements across sectors including disability and ageing, mental health, alcohol and other drugs, and care and protection of children; and
- Strategies for engagement with the business sector in Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory.

#### *Other Disability Reforms*

Ministers noted progress on the National Disability Strategy, including the consultation report from the National People with Disabilities and Carer Council *Shut Out: the experience of people with disabilities and their families in Australia*.

Ministers agreed that the National Disability Strategy will provide an inter-governmental, whole-of-government framework for improving outcomes for people with disability. The National Disability Strategy will be launched in 2010.

Ministers also agreed that work should be undertaken to investigate a nationally consistent approach to identifying appropriately trained assistance dogs. This work will be considered at the next meeting.

Ministers noted the *Secure and Sustainable Pension Reform* package will deliver increases for pensioners including Disability Support Pensioners and Carer Payment recipients.

Ministers noted Victoria's Build for Life initiative which promotes accessible stylish residential design, and allows houses to be adapted for older residents and people with disability.

#### **Children's Services and Child Protection**

In National Child Protection Week 2009, Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to work together to reduce child abuse and neglect in Australia by endorsing the first Implementation Plan (2009-2012) for the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children*.

Ministers also noted progress on implementing key initiatives under the National Framework.

Ministers endorsed the first three locations for new Communities for Children Plus sites - Ipswich in Queensland, Launceston in Tasmania, and Cardinia in Victoria.

From early 2010, these first sites will provide intensive early intervention services to vulnerable families and children in their local community, building on the success of the Communities for Children program.

Ministers also endorsed new information sharing arrangements between Medicare Australia and state and territory child protection agencies, building on the success of this Protocol with Centrelink.

Important medical information can now be shared to identify and respond to children at risk.

Ministers noted that since the information sharing process was introduced, child protection agencies have made around 2000 requests to Centrelink, most seeking details of a family's location where a child is at risk.

Ministers noted the recent Australian Senate Community Affairs Committee Report on progress with the implementation of the recommendations of the Lost Innocents and Forgotten Australians Reports again called for a national apology to people who experienced abuse and/or neglect in institutional or out-of-home care as children.

Ministers are united in their support for a national apology to Forgotten Australians and former child migrants. This apology will be made by the end of 2009, following consultations with those affected by these past practices, advocacy groups and past care providers.

Ministers also noted the significant progress achieved to date with key early childhood reforms:

- The Australian Early Development Index endorsed by COAG as a national progress measure of early childhood development; and
- The National Quality Agenda which will be put to COAG for endorsement later this year.

### **Community Services**

Ministers noted progress on the Australian Government Compact with the non-profit sector.