



Council for the Australian
Federation

Council for the Australian Federation

Friday, 12 April 2024

Meeting Communiqué

The Council for the Australian Federation (CAF) met on 12 April 2024 with a focus on important disability and health reforms, as well as confirming other key priorities for this year.

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

State and territory First Ministers are deeply committed to working in partnership with the Commonwealth to implement measures that will get the NDIS back on track and secure its future. As part of this commitment work has progressed since the start of 2024 on the design of new disability 'foundational supports'. This work will take time and will require deep engagement with people with disability and the disability community. Foundational supports will be a critical part of Australia's future 'disability ecosystem' and must be in place before any changes are made to the way that people access the NDIS.

State and territory First Ministers remain concerned that a draft of the NDIS Amendment (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No. 1) Bill 2024 was received only days before it was introduced into Australian Parliament on 27 March 2024. This meant there was no meaningful opportunity to understand how the proposed changes might impact people with disability, and impacts on health services, schools, and the community. CAF intend to provide a submission to the Community Affairs Legislation Committee for Inquiry setting out state and territory key concerns with the NDIS Amendment Bill.

CAF members stressed the importance of learning from past experiences. As co-stewards of the NDIS, states and territories must be genuine partners in these reforms, so that no current or future NDIS participants are not able to access the supports that they need, when and where they need it. There is no benefit to rushing.

CAF members discussed the strong link between the NDIS, foundational supports and mainstream services. In this context, strong governance arrangements are needed for the disability ecosystem, including the development of a Disability Intergovernmental Agreement, that was recommended in the NDIS Review, to consider the complex interfaces between the disability, health, and education systems, and make sure there are clear roles and responsibilities for all parts of government.

Health reform

National Cabinet agreed last December that it would deliver long-term system-wide structural health reform through the negotiation of the next National Health Reform Agreement (NHRA), based on the recommendations of Ms Rosemary Huxtable in her 2023 review of the current agreement.

The next NHRA will be critical to address the enduring pressures facing state and territory emergency departments and hospitals and deliver much-needed reforms so that all

Australians can access high quality and affordable primary and aged care, when and where they need it, including those living in rural or remote communities.

Housing

Australia is facing acute housing pressures, with limited supply not able to keep up with demand from population growth in a constrained infrastructure market. At the same time, cost of living pressures and rising rents are placing significant demands on social housing and homelessness services.

States and territories remain firmly committed to delivering the Housing Accord Target of 1.2 million well-located homes and providing more secure, affordable housing for all Australians. However, this requires upfront investment from the Commonwealth, as part of a genuine partnership to ensure we can meet Australia's housing needs.

Greater investment in social housing and homelessness services under the next National Housing and Homelessness Agreement is also vital to assist states and territories to deliver essential services during a housing and homelessness crisis.

Other CAF Priorities

State and territory First Ministers recognised the focus throughout 2024 will largely be on the negotiation of several significant national funding agreements which are due to expire over the coming 18 months. It was acknowledged that CAF provides states and territories with a forum for proactive and collaborative action to help shape negotiation of significant agreements and reforms.

In addition, states and territories will have a focus on energy transition, in particular transmission infrastructure and agreed Commonwealth and state and territory approval pathways.

CAF also noted the progress made on priorities throughout 2023 across areas including health, and skills and workforce reform.