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**Advisory Committee on Health Emergency Response to Coronavirus (COVID-19) for People  
with Disability**  
**Seventh Meeting: 2 June 2020**  
**Key Outcomes**

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The Department of Health (the Department) provided a progress report to members of the Advisory Committee on a number of priority items. Guidance materials, including advice for health professionals, for families, and for carers and support workers have been disseminated through peak medical bodies and the Primary Health Networks. Further Easy Read fact sheets are also being developed. A hospital passport titled the COVID-19 Companion has been drafted for people with disability and is with the Advisory Committee for review. The Department thanked the committee for its contribution and assistance in progressing key actions within the Plan. The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (NQSC) provided an update to the Advisory Committee on COVID-19 surveillance data for NDIS participants.

Two people with disability from the Council of Intellectual Disability presented their firsthand experiences of life during the COVID-19 pandemic. The common themes that emerged were: the difficulties of interacting with medical staff and understanding the information presented; the urgent need for more Easy Read resources to be developed both locally and nationally; and the mental and emotional impacts of not being able to go outside and socialise with friends.

The Deputy Chief Medical Officer for Mental Health provided insight into the National Mental Health and Wellbeing Pandemic Response Plan and discussed how people with complex needs, including people with disability, were a priority population.

Each state and territory representative provided an update on the situation for people with disability in their jurisdiction and the initiatives currently being carried out to support them.

The Advisory Committee discussed a range of topics including, but not limited to:

- the variability in approach of disability service providers in the easing of restrictions and the services being offered to people with disability;
- the overrepresentation of people with disability in mental health statistics and how important it is to include people with disability in mental health initiatives moving forward; and
- the need for accessible COVID-19 testing methods to be established which would include exploring the possibility of testing at home.

## **NEXT STEPS**

- The Advisory Committee will continue to meet fortnightly, with state and territory representatives invited to attend meetings on an ongoing basis.
- The Department will continue to progress: the individual health plans and the COVID-19 Companion for people with disability; the establishment of an advisory phone service for health professionals; and the Evaluation Framework.
- The next iteration of the Management and Operational Plan for COVID-19 for People with Disability will be presented to the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee for endorsement in the coming week.
- The Department will work with the NQSC to explore options for assisting service providers navigate the easing of restrictions.

- The Department will provide key statistics to the Advisory Committee regarding access to the National Medical Stockpile for personal protective equipment (PPE).
- The Department and the Department of Social Services will continue to explore options to assist parents and schools in returning students with disability back into the school environment safely.
- The Department will continue to implement key actions under the social media strategy which aims to direct people with disability to key resources and information on [health.gov.au](https://www.health.gov.au).