

# NDIS UTILISATION PROJECT

This summary presents the key issues shared by  
**Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)**  
Victorian NDIS Participants.

## DIVERSE UNDERSTANDING OF DISABILITY

- Different cultural ways of thinking about and experiencing disability can influence how individuals and families engage with the NDIS.
- Some families, especially from migrant and refugee backgrounds, may have never received any disability supports before.
- Some communities can also experience uncertainty about government systems or be new to receiving any government support.

## CULTURAL COMPETENCIES ACROSS THE NDIS

- Limited access to culturally sensitive and language specific information often made it more difficult for participants to learn about the NDIS and how to participate in processes such as planning and review meetings.
- Participants felt that the NDIS workforce did not always have a good understanding of how to engage with and support the needs of culturally diverse individuals and communities.
- When these supports were available, participants reported the NDIS had played a critical role in raising awareness of disability and provided new opportunities to access services and supports.
- Participants also expressed the need for the NDIS workforce to understand collective and familial relations as part of culturally specific understandings of disability and care and to facilitate such processes systematically.

"Disabilities are looked at in a different way. People don't know much information [or] have limited views on it, because of their belief and culture. People with mental illness can be frowned upon. So you want to just hide and say you're unwell. At the beginning I didn't have the right diagnosis. Before I went on NDIS I had a fear of this. Now I found that the people are out there to help us. The nurses and social workers and everyone. And my family told me that it's okay, if you need help use it".

**Study participant**

## ADVOCACY AND CULTURALLY SENSITIVE SUPPORT

- Participants described the important role of community advocacy organisations in helping them understand the NDIS, gain access and receive a plan that reflects their needs and aspirations.
- These organisations were also critical in helping participants identify and access useful services and supports, as well as in helping workers and service providers learn how to provide culturally sensitive and safe services.
- Yet such supports were not always readily available or accessible, with many community advocacy organisations under-resourced to meet demand.

"I now have the option of living in my own place. ... It's changed my life dramatically and made me look beyond what I'm used to ... The NDIS, that system was a large contributor to what I have now and the freedoms I am able to enjoy it, that your everyday persons might take for granted".

**Study participant**

## ACCESS TO SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

- The limited supply of disability services, therapists, interpreters and workers that are able to meet the diverse cultural, language and disability needs of participants was a key issue undermining effective utilisation.

## CONTACT US.

This research was commissioned by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services and implemented by researchers from the University of Melbourne's Melbourne Disability Institute and the Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, and Ms Jody Barney, Independent Indigenous Research Consultant.

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