3 April 2020

**Communiqué**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation, the second meeting of the Disability Council NSW for 2020 was held online via Zoom. To ensure accessibility for all members live captioning and an auslan interpreter were utilised.

At the meeting, Ms Melinda Norton from the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), informed the Council about different measures and temporary changes that are being made by the NSW Government, including DCJ, to ensure that government functions and services can be delivered in line with current advice about reducing the potential for the transmission of COVID-19. More information on measures taken by DCJ can be found at <https://coronavirus.dcj.nsw.gov.au>.

Ms Norton also briefly informed the Council about key actions being taken by States, Territories, and the Commonwealth Government, to ensure provisions are in place to support people with disability at this time.

The Council discussed its role in supporting people with disability in NSW during the pandemic and as a response has prepared an information sheet with links to relevant information on services and supports currently available for people with disability in NSW. This can be found at <https://coronavirus.dcj.nsw.gov.au/services/seniors-and-people-with-disability-and-carers>.

Ms Vertiy Lomax, from Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC), joined the meeting to inform the Council about the work DPC is currently undertaking around social procurement policy and why this policy has been identified as a complementary strategy to improve employment outcomes for people with disability in NSW. Ms Lomax appreciated valuable insights and advice from the members and acknowledged the Council’s contribution in supporting DPC co-design an approach that could improve outcomes for people with disability through social procurement.

Mr Jordan Leef, from DPC, joined the Council meeting to seek feedback on two NSW Government websites that are dedicated to providing information about NSW Government services and support to vulnerable communities during COVID-19 pandemic.

* <https://preview.nsw.gov.au/covid-19>
* <https://coronavirus.dcj.nsw.gov.au/services/older-people-and-people-with-disability-and-carers>

The Council was requested to provide feedback around content usefulness for people with disability, their carers’ and families, information gaps, content accessibility etc. Given web links were provided to Council members in advance, members were able to provide quality feedback and advice on the day. Mr Leef also welcomed any additional feedback via email.

Additionally, Mr Leef also updated the Council about the findings from the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Reform Group project on barriers experienced by culturally & linguistically different communities when trying to access the NDIS. The Council was also informed about the status of a similar project for Aboriginal communities accessing the NDIS. Mr Leef has requested any feedback for both projects via email.

After the break, the council was consulted by Ms Corin Moffat and Mr Patrick Ingle from AlphaBeta Advisory. AlphaBeta Advisory has been engaged by Department of Social Services (DSS) to work with the states and territory disability and skills officials to develop high impact policy initiatives to support and develop the NDIS workforce. Ms Moffat shared some of the early messages they were hearing through stakeholder consultations and sought feedback and ideas from members on key issues and challenges they are aware of. Ms Moffat also took the opportunity to discuss the impact of COVID-19 in the NDIS workforce and sought feedback from the Council as to what DSS might need to do to support the workforce in the immediate period.

The Council will next meet on 26 June 2020.

**Mark Tonga**

**Chair, Disability Council NSW**