

NZDSN Newsletter June 2021

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“COVID-19 has been likened to an x-ray, revealing fractures in the fragile skeleton of the societies we have built. It is exposing fallacies and falsehoods everywhere:

The lie that free markets can deliver healthcare for all; the fiction that unpaid care work is not work; the delusion that we live in a post-racist world; the myth that we are all in the same boat.

While we are all floating on the same sea, it's clear that some are in super yachts, while others are clinging to the drifting debris.”

– Antonio Guterres, United Nations Secretary General

A message from our CE

Tena Koutou Katoa

As most of you will know by now my last day as CE of NZDSN is June 30th. It has been an absolute privilege to hold such a role and to serve the people and organisations who make such an impact on the lives of so many disabled people and families/whanau throughout Aotearoa. It has certainly been a roller coaster at times, especially the last year or so! There have been a number of steep learning curves which have certainly kept my motivation and energy levels where they have needed to be – it's one of those roles where you never know quite what's just around the corner.

Highlights for me have included the connections with our regional networks, ongoing relationships with key officials and Ministers; our annual conferences (and yes they will be returning next October) the development of the employment support diploma qualification; our ongoing engagement with Enabling good lives through our provider development programmes and events; and the Joint Work programme with DSS (which has also pulled in multiple organisations and collaborators) and involves several projects across workforce development and commissioning.

Of course none of our work is possible without our dedicated NZDSN team who have been so incredibly supportive throughout my tenure – Sue Eastwood, Sara Georgeson and Mireille Vreeburg. We have also had a regular team of contractors who have made significant contributions in their specialist areas on

a regular basis: Gordon Boxall, Grant Cleland, Nicky Louis, Fiona Jones, Tony Mclean, Pete Wilson, Nicky Maine, Callum McMenamin, Libby Carson, Neale Jones and Clint Smith. And of course Matua Graham Warren who has provided such valuable cultural support.

Our regional networks are critical to our work and I would like to acknowledge all the regional hosts/coordinators and the key roles they play in keeping us on top of what's important and disseminating information from NZDSN.

I have been very lucky to serve under 3 Board chairs who have provided me with fantastic support – asked searching questions, but let me get on with the job: Wendy Becker, Sharon Saxton and Sean Stowers. And a huge thanks to all the Board members who have governed NZDSN over the last six and a half years – the core Board members, but also our Employment Advisory Committee and Tui Tuia. I know that at times we have really stretched the concept of a “working board” and I have been very grateful for the advice, guidance and active support you have all provided at different times.

My first two roles in the sector were as a “sheltered workshop supervisor” and as a “Hostel Father” (at the age of 21!). I think this signals just how far things have come over the years. However, lets never rest on our laurels. We know the drivers of oppression and inequity are always with us and hard won gains for a more inclusive world need just as much effort to sustain these over time.

I am leaving NZDSN to transition into “semi-retirement” and hope to stay

connected through some project and board work. After nearly 45 years working in and around the sector it's time to pay some real attention to that work/life balance thing.

Ngā mihi nui



Farewell Garth from Sean Stowers (NZDSN Board Chair)

As the Chair of the NZDSN Board, it is with a tinge of sadness that I write this tribute to Garth Bennie, our Chief Executive, who finishes up on 1 July after six and a half years of leading NZDSN. Garth is the third Chief Executive for NZDSN and over his time has reported to three board Chairs. All Board Chairs have held Garth's leadership in high regard and commented that it is through his leadership that the profile and reputation of NZDSN has gone from strength to strength.

There are numerous achievements and milestones that Garth and his team have achieved over his tenure. A few that are front of mind have been:

- The success of national conferences as an opportunity to bring members together and ensure content is both relevant and meaningful for our diverse membership.

- The development of partnerships and training to embed Enabling Good Lives principles in our members' practice.
- The relationships developed with Ministers and key officials. Garth has found a good balance of holding this group to account while also being a collaborative and supportive partner at the same time.
- A conduit and sounding board for our members over the Covid-19 period. At the height of the pandemic, Garth worked tirelessly in ensuring that the interface between the MoH and our NZDSN members was the best it could be. This was not without issues and considerable frustration for Garth over this time.
- The development of a joint work programme with MoH that has seen a focus on workforce development initiatives and commissioning.

For me, personally, I have admired the strength and conviction of Garth to do the right thing for our members and disabled people. *Whiria te tangata* – 'weave the people together'. This not only speaks to the deep-seated knowledge Garth has in the sector but also to his vision of knowing what is possible for the future. On behalf of the board Garth, thank you.

While all good things must end I am pleased that we have been able to retain Garth on a project basis for the next year to progress the workforce development initiatives as part of our joint work programme with MoH. It will be great to

have this continuity for such an important piece of work.

Transition arrangements are currently underway for temporary cover of the role and I hope to be able to announce this and the appointment of a new CE in the coming weeks.

NZDSN/DSS joint work programme

This work programme has been in development since we met with the Director General last year where it was agreed that NZDSN and DSS would embark on a joint work programme focused on two key priority areas:

Priority One: Commissioning for sustainability, flexibility and Innovation



Priority 1

Priority Two: A workforce development strategy focused on future focused qualification pathways and leadership development to support innovation



Priority 2

We are now very pleased to be able to share detailed project descriptions and plans for each priority area.

The Commissioning project is split into part A) the "here and now" which refers to addressing funding current inequities and the future of the RPM and part B) "future commissioning" which refers to the development of planning and pricing

tools and associated resources to support the roll out of Flexible Disability Support (FDS) contracts.

The Workforce project is a suite of initiatives to address the shortcomings of current qualifications content and delivery, along with leadership development opportunities and resources to support the embedding of EGL informed practice across organisations. This project is being funded through the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Development and Careerforce. A project governance group will have oversight of these projects made up of project sponsors (funders), NZDSN, the National EGL Leadership Group and Te Pukenga.

Each of these projects include multiple opportunities for people to be involved in project co-lead roles, stakeholder groups and working groups. Expressions of Interest will soon be invited for some of these roles, particularly for the workforce projects. Some of the membership of working groups for the projects around commissioning will be more targeted to ensure we have on board the financial analysis skills, cost modelling expertise and first-hand experience with FDS.

Vaccination roll out information

A pool of \$2 million has been established to fund projects that would increase access, uptake, support informed consent and information dissemination to New Zealand's disabled community. The funding application documents are now live on the Ministry of Health website and can be found [here](#).

Explore Specialist Advice NZ has developed a new resource to assist people and families who might need extra support and strategies to have a successful vaccination experience and which also complements the [SDM information and tools](#). This resource is now live and can be found [here](#). Other vaccination information is available in easy-read format on the Ministry [website](#).

Some DHBs are taking some time to respond and get organised with approaches that bring the vaccinators to where people live, and get their heads around SDM and informed consent. You don't have to wait for the DHB to contact you about processes that bring vaccinations to people. There is nothing stopping people using community sites. These sites operate differently around the country depending on how busy they are and how they decide to deal with "walk ups." You will need to ensure this works for people you are supporting, you can provide the support that some people may need with the process, and you can verify that they are in group 2 or 3. Note that there is no requirement to provide proof of disability, such as a medical certificate. This means people can decide for themselves whether they live with a disability, using the definitions on the Ministry [website](#).

Benefit increases not being passed on to disabled people living in residential services

During the latter part of 2020 we began drawing Ministry of Health officials' attention to a long standing anomaly regarding income support payments

received by disabled people living in Ministry funded residential services. An agreement between the Ministry of Social Development and Ministry of Health that stems from the 1990s means that people living in residential services are not entitled to one-off increases in base benefit rates as the result of budget decisions. A portion of the benefit is transferred to the Ministry of Health as a “client funding contribution” (the residential support subsidy) for the cost of funding residential services and the balance is passed on as a “personal allowance” to residents by Work and Income. While this split has been recalibrated in response to CPI indexed benefit increases over the years the same has not been done when there are one-off benefit increases such as those announced in the last two budgets.

This anomaly was brought into sharp focus with last year’s one-off \$25 per week increase in benefits followed by further and even more significant increases announced in this year’s budget. The increases in last year’s budget have not been passed on to disabled people in residential services and our concern is that there appears to be no discernible plan for this or for the more recent increases. Furthermore, the process and timing of how any of the client contribution component from these one-off increases finds their way into funding for residential services is less than transparent.

We are informed that work is underway by officials to address these issues, but that it will require cabinet approval and possibly changes to legislation. This indicates that it could be some time before disabled people living in

residential services receive what should be an entitlement to levels of income support that everyone else on these benefits are afforded. Delaying access to income support entitlements to a group of disabled people because of the difficulty in resolving complex and historical funding agreements cannot be justified.

We have suggested to Ministers that a process be put in place immediately to ensure both last year’s and this year’s benefit increases are promptly passed on through proportionate increases to peoples’ personal allowances, and that urgency be given to the policy pickle that is the residential support subsidy!

Employment support services update

National coordinator role

We are currently seeking to appoint a National Employment Support Services Coordinator (refer to Expression of Interest below) to oversee our work programme with MSD and to ensure that our policy advocacy work in this area is as vigorous as it needs to be.

There are a number of issues that are presenting significant challenges to employment support providers that we are currently discussing with MSD. These include:

- The cash flow difficulties that the outcomes payment system presents and unintended consequences that take providers away from the practice guidelines
- We have suggested that MSD urgently replace enrolment and

planning outcome payments with a bulk funding in advance arrangement for these components

- That the pricing of contracts be reviewed – we are aware that several providers are cross subsidising to make employment services viable
- That a cycle of independent developmental evaluation be introduced.

Regional employment networks

Over the coming three months we are strengthening our regional networks to ensure that we have regional host/coordinators organising employment provider network meetings either just before or just after existing NZDSN regional network meetings.

This is an opportunity to facilitate networking and influence change at a national level. Provider networks play a vital role in making sure that organisations are networking with each other but also as a conduit for making sure that the most pressing issues and challenges are raised at a national level and with MSD. The new National Coordinator role will play a critical link with regional networks in this regard. Regular Zoom calls will be held between regional coordinators and the national coordinator to make sure we are on top of provider interests and concerns.

We are able to confirm that the following Regional Host/Coordinators are already in place:

Waikato/Bay of Plenty: [Karen Scott](#)

Wellington: [France Asiz](#)

Christchurch: [Louise Deane](#) and [Jonathan Mackie](#)

Dunedin: [Simon McCosh](#) and [Alison Petrie](#)

Contact these people to find out when/where the next meeting is.

We are currently looking for regional coordinators in Auckland, Hawkes Bay and Nelson/Marlborough.

The role involves scheduling and chairing meetings, developing and putting out an agenda and organising venue/catering. Coordinators will get support from the national employment coordinator and NZDSN office for managing network meeting registrations.

Contact the NZDSN office if you are interested in taking up this role in these locations.

Expressions of interest sought

National Employment Support Services Coordinator

NZDSN is pleased to be in a position to appoint to this role from 1 July 2021. The work will involve on average, 10hrs per week and will be a contracted role, however secondment arrangements will also be considered.

Key responsibilities and activities will involve:

- Providing oversight of our contracted work programme with the Ministry of Social Development. This currently involves workforce projects, reviewing practice guidelines and the MSD training fund

- Providing policy advocacy and advice to the Ministry of Social Development
- Representing the current issues and concerns of employment support providers to government
- Liaison with regional networks to ensure that NZDSN is across current issues and to communicate/report on outcomes related to employment support services.

We are looking for someone who:

- Has strong networks and relationships across the sector
- Has experience in the delivery and development of employment support services
- Is familiar with the current policy and funding issues impacting this sector
- Is an effective communicator

Applicants should express their interest by providing a CV and cover letter outlining the key attributes and skills they would bring to the role by 18 June 2021.

Email applications to:
admin@nzdsn.org.nz

Training and Workforce Development Fund

The Training Fund is available to staff members of organisations contracted by the Ministry of Social Development National Office to provide employment, participation and inclusion services for people with disabilities. NZDSN administers this fund on behalf of MSD. People can apply for assistance from

this fund throughout the year. Click [here](#) for further information.

Sleepover hours now excluded when assessing remuneration for Skilled Migrant and Essential Skills Visas

NZDSN have had it confirmed by Immigration NZ that instructions have now been updated to exclude sleepover hours from the remuneration calculation for Skilled Migrant and Essential Skills visas. The definition of work has also been amended to exclude sleepover hours. These changes take effect on 24 May 2021.

For visas already granted - From 24 May 2021, the change to the definition of work means that an ES visa holder with a remuneration condition will not be in breach of their visa conditions if they perform sleepovers.

Applicants who have provided updated employment agreements or letters confirming they do not do sleepovers do not need to contact INZ if they now wish to do sleepovers.

It is important to note that significant changes are currently being developed by Immigration NZ with regards to these visas. A new 3-check visa application system is being introduced and will replace six temporary work visas (including the Essential Skills visa). This will go 'live' on 1 November 2021. **Employers will need to be accredited by Immigration NZ in order to employ new migrant workers after 30 October 2021.** Go to their [website](#) for further information. NZDSN continues to have dialogue with Immigration NZ and is looking at where we might have a lead

role as a peak body in the development of Sector Agreements (these are still “on the table” but have been put on hold due to Covid 19).

Closed facebook groups

A reminder: we have 7 closed Facebook pages associated with our main **NZDSN Facebook Page** These groups are intended to facilitate connections with others, to share resources and information and to discuss specific topic related matters. These groups are specifically for NZDSN members only and if you would like access to a closed group, please request this on the page for which you would like access. The pages are:

Transition from School

High and Complex Needs

Supporting Families

Workplace Health and Safety/Injury Prevention

Finance

Tui Tuia

Small Providers