**Aboriginal** & **Torres Strait Islander**

**Disability Network of Queensland**



 **ATSIDNQ**

**Submission to the**

**National Disability Advocacy Framework Review**

**July 2015**

**Background**

*The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Disability Network of Queensland (ATSIDNQ) is a network of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a disability. It was established to raise awareness of the cultural and social needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a disability, their families and carers. The Network also provides information and a voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).*

**Recommendations**

While supportive of the National Disability Advocacy Framework, the ATSIDNQ recommends that the following points be considered to ensure that the framework is culturally inclusive of people who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander:

1. Translating the framework to suit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples requires an understanding that those who have a disability are considered *Special Beings* in the context of traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and their care is of primary importance to all within those communities. This is the position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples generally whether they reside in urban, rural or remote locations.
2. Effective engagement, communication and skilled practices are central to ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients have a voice and are heard. This is instrumental when producing and implementing an effective and efficient service delivery model.
3. Consideration must be given to the fact that although Australia’s First Nation Peoples comprise persons of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander decent, they mostly identify with different clans groups and in essence represent different areas across Australia. This identity brings with it different customs / Lore’s and perspectives which frame the person’s views, behaviors and practices.
4. Government and other decision making groups continue to be asked by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to take the time to understand their diversity and respect that. With that diversity comes varying points of views. This identity may translate to the way Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People want to address issues and concerns.
5. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to ask that time be taken in the engagement process to ensure accurate representation so that decisions are made through consensus. This ensures that recommendations are realistic, practical and that policies, strategies and programs are correctly informed.
6. It is important to understand that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have a very real desire to make change in their circumstance and partner in decision making.
7. Advice provided by a single Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander individual in isolation may not always be correct or representative. The historic practice of engaging of one or a select hand full of individuals is no longer considered acceptable by the broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities. This is especially true where those decisions impact on the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples particularly those with a disability
8. Appropriate representation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples has historically been seen as difficult. There are many facets of which Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people particularly with a disability are challenged by. Lack of available funds and resources, in particularly in rural and remote areas, has played a role in hampering effective engagement and representation. This perception has often resulted in a short cut mentality regarding the development of policies and programs.
9. There are a myriad of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policies, strategies, programs and activities being independently developed or implemented at any given time. Many of the engagement processes associated with these activities are flawed and as a consequence the outcomes are costly, limited and not sustainable
10. The participation of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traditional Custodians, Elders, Eminent Persons and individuals in reviews, planning and development is considered the correct and only manner in which real measurable, sustainable and quality outcomes can be achieved for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples
11. The establishment of a disability advocacy framework that is inclusive will permit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to discuss, develop and recommend measures that need to be taken to effect change and achieve the best practice outcomes which are culturally sensitive and respectful. Through the use of this type of careful and informed engagement practice real partnerships are able to be developed. This will ensure continued participation from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and support not only in the planning and development but also implementation, monitoring and review of the National Advocacy Framework

Service responses funded or delivered under the Framework should reflect the above.

**Further Information:**

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