

Northern Territory Disability Advisory Council (DAC) Operational Guidelines

DAC participation strategy

The community and consumer participation processes will advise on community needs, priorities and consumer interests with a focus on:

- improving access to services and information, service quality, consumer participation and identifying equity issues
- enabling consumer and community input into service development and improved models of disability service delivery.

Aims

To achieve effective community and consumer participation at varying levels of health service delivery:

1. To provide a voice for the community and consumers to disability services, the Minister for Family and Community Services and senior levels of the Department of Health and Community Services on issues related to disability needs, priorities and services.
2. To advise on creative solutions to unique local and remote disability issues.
3. To establish a two-way information exchange by:
 - representatives of consumers and the community informing disability service providers of priority issues
 - service providers informing consumers and the community of priority disability needs and suitable models of service delivery to improve access and quality.
4. To achieve effective consumer, disability services and inter-agency links that influence disability services and outcomes for Territorians at the following levels:
 - local
 - district
 - region
 - Territory.

Advisory Councils: Terms of Reference

1. To provide disability service providers, the Department of Health and Community Services and Minister for Family and Community Services with advice on disability services and the needs of people with disabilities, their families and carers within the area that they represent.
2. To be receptive to the diverse opinions, ideas and proposed solutions of people across the lifespan, cultures and groups within the broader community.

3. To support community feedback to the Minister and DHCS regarding disability service provision.
4. To provide information to the Minister on the disability needs of the community and the appropriateness of models of service provision and consumer interests.
5. To advise on opportunities to improve the coordination of disability service delivery.
6. To raise the level of consumer and community understanding of disability issues.
7. Contribute to the development of service delivery models.
8. To develop and work to a plan that outlines the priority issues of the Advisory Council.

Role of Advisory Council members

The role of the Advisory Council community and consumer members is to:

Access and represent the views of the community and consumers:

- offer lateral solutions/ideas
- seek to increase consumers' and the community's understanding of priority disability issues.

In doing this members are expected to:

- become familiar with the priorities of the disability services at a local, district and regional level
- talk to community members and consumers about local disability issues
- present the views and opinions of consumers and propose ideas to improve service access and quality
- encourage diverse input and offer creative and lateral ideas and solutions to disability service issues
- seek to increase the understanding of consumers and the community about priority disability issues.

Role of Disability Service Providers

The key role of Disability Service Providers, managers and agency representatives is to provide and receive advice plus support the development of Advisory Council members', consumers' and the community's understanding of priority disability issues. In doing this they are expected to:

- share knowledge and expertise about disability issues, service delivery priorities and realities, planning and development
- incorporate the views of the Advisory Council members into improved service delivery quality and planning.

It is anticipated that, where possible, all members will attend the Advisory Council meetings for the full meeting and participate in the Advisory Council working parties as agreed either in person, via teleconference or videoconference.

It is an important role of the Advisory Councils to provide advice. When providing that advice it is better to reflect the degree of consensus and/or range of opinions on an issue rather than present an outcome based on a vote. Valuing diverse opinion and creativity is a key component of Advisory Councils.

Role of Chairperson

The Chairperson:

- will work within the terms of reference in a way best suited to the Disability Services
- will encourage input into the Advisory Council that is diverse, offers lateral and creative ideas and solutions to disability and service issues
- will coordinate the development and implementation of a work plan for the Advisory Council
- will set meeting agendas and facilitate Advisory Council meetings, with the assistance of the Deputy Chair. The Chair ensures that each agenda item is addressed appropriately, and assigns the item to the appropriate members or representatives for action and follow up
- may be called upon to represent the Council. This duty can be assigned to other Disability Advisory members.

Membership of the Advisory Council

Advisory Councils' membership can include up to 15 members and is derived from the community. Consumer and community members constitute the membership of the Advisory Councils. Disability Service providers and agency representatives are participants on Advisory Councils for the purpose of hearing the consumer and community perspective, contributing information and actioning relevant advice.

All members of the Disability Advisory Council are appointed by the Minister for Family and Community Services.

It is both government policy, and in the interests of the community, that committees, boards and advisory structures reflect the composition, diversity and views of people in NT. Appointment criteria aim to achieve appropriate representation of:

- women
- Aboriginal people
- youth
- seniors
- people with a disability
- members from other cultural groups on the Advisory Councils.

The Advisory Council consumer and community members need to be resident within the NT, and be selected based on their willingness and ability to:

- reflect the views of users of the disability services
- effectively consult with key disability service users and groups in the community
- provide advice on how to improve services within the region
- work with other Advisory Council members on key consumer issues
- increase their understanding of the practical, political and economic factors influencing services in NT.

Membership structure

The Disability Advisory Council will comprise a Chairperson and a Deputy Chairperson selected by the Minister for Family and Community Services.

Membership numbers will reflect the consumer, community and district needs for fair and appropriate representation.

The membership structure of the Disability Advisory Council is:

Chairperson	Refer to role outline on following page.
Deputy Chairperson	
Members	<p><i>Community/consumer representatives</i> constitute the membership of the Advisory Council.</p> <p>The aim is for there to be at least 60 per cent consumer representatives who are direct or indirect users of disability services included as members.</p> <p>Membership of the Disability Advisory Council includes representation from urban, rural and remote communities, consumers, advocate/peak and service provider groups, Aboriginal people/communities and community leaders.</p>
Disability Service and agency representatives	<p>Agency representatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • non-government Disability Service Providers • Director or delegate NT Aged and Disability Program (ex-officio) • representative Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (ex-officio) • other ex-officio members on an ad-hoc basis as appropriate.

Note: As a guiding principle, stakeholders, service providers and agency representatives should comprise no more than approximately 30 per cent of the total number of Advisory Council members

* See **Glossary** for definition of *membership*.

Application, selection and appointment process

The principle underlying advertising Advisory Council positions is to gain widespread community and consumer awareness of the role and opportunity to be a member of the Disability Advisory Council. Word of mouth and local community advertising are effective ways of generating interest and increasing access to local information.

Tenure of Advisory Council members

Membership tenure of each Advisory Council will be allocated for terms of two or three years. This will avoid all of the Councils' membership expiring at the same time. Allocation of the membership tenure should occur at the first meeting.

All resignations should be in writing addressed to the Minister.

Council may recommend removal if conduct of member is deemed by Council to not be conducive to aims of Council and / or if member is absent from three consecutive meeting days without reasonable excuse.

On completion of the Advisory Council members' tenure:

- all positions will be filled by an Expression of Interest process
- a Panel appointed by the Minister will make recommendations regarding the membership to the Minister.

Temporary replacement of members

Consumer and community members

Temporary replacement of members will occur by recommendation from the Disability Advisory Council Chairperson and Director of Aged and Disability (DHCS) (e.g. in cases where a community member resigns pre-completion of the term and a period of time will elapse before a replacement is recruited and approved, or where circumstances cause the community representative to be unavailable for a period of time). Such replacements should represent the same or similar health/consumer interest or locality as the previous member.

The use of proxies to represent Advisory Council members, who are on occasion not able to attend meetings, is not recommended.

Disability Service and agency representatives

Disability Service and agency nominees apply to be representatives on the Advisory Councils using the Expression of Interest process.

Temporary replacement of these representatives on Advisory Councils will occur by nomination, with the recommendation made to the Disability Advisory Council Chairperson and Director of Aged and Disability Services DHCS.

Appointment of the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson

Within approximately two months of the Advisory Council establishment the Minister for Family and Community Services should nominate and appoint a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson.

The Chairperson and Deputy are to be a community/consumer representative and cannot be an employee of a disability service or agency representative, or a disability service provider.

If the Chairperson resigns or steps down from the position during the term of the Advisory Council then the Deputy Chairperson will take up the responsibilities of the Chairperson, until a Chairperson is appointed by the Advisory Council.

Work plan and reports

Within the first three months, a draft work plan for the coming 12 months will be developed. The work plan will identify how the Advisory Council aims to undertake its role and the support needs of that role.

A quarterly or half yearly short summary report will be submitted to the Minister for Health and Community Services outlining the following:

- key initiatives and activities of the Advisory Council
- issues and achievements of the Advisory Council in relation to community and consumer participation and work plan priorities
- areas of un-met need
- future plans and proposals
- achievements and lessons learnt
- support needs of the Advisory Council.

Evaluation criteria

Within the first 12 months the Advisory Council will draft a work plan that includes **simple and relevant** evaluation criteria to enable the Advisory Council to gain feedback on its progress and areas to build upon.

These criteria might initially focus on:

- building the ability of the membership and Advisory Council to obtain information about key disability issues
- consumer and community consultation strategies and effectiveness
- the effective workings of the Advisory Council
- achievements in relation to consumer and community input into disability service improvement.

Reimbursement and support

The principle associated with reimbursement is that community and consumer members should be fairly reimbursed for expenses associated with required and approved travel related to the essential business and work plan of the Advisory Council.

A sitting fee will be paid to the Advisory Council Chairperson. Members of the Disability Advisory Council will not be paid sitting fees.

Disability Service, Community and consumer members will be reimbursed on a cost recovery basis for any out of pocket expenses incurred whilst undertaking tasks allocated by the Advisory Council in accordance with the work plan. Approval of these expenses will be through the recommendation of the Chairperson to the Director of Aged and Disability DHCS for authorisation. This must occur prior to the expenses being incurred.

An annual budget allocation will be set aside for Advisory Council activities. Funds will support associated travel, participation costs and secretariat support as required.

The Secretariat (Aged and Disability Program, DHCS) – will provide administrative support and other telecommunication, equipment, venue, catering and facilitation support as agreed in the work plan. Interpreters, teleconference, videoconference and other methods of support will be made available where possible to enable Advisory Council members to attend meetings.

Confidentiality issues and conflict of interest

Advisory Council members and participants must be aware of the need for sensitivity and confidentiality in relation to matters addressed by the Advisory Council, particularly related to issues that are sensitive or deal with individual experiences.

Where relevant, Advisory Council members and participants must disclose a conflict of interest when it arises.

Meeting frequency and process

After the initial Advisory Council role and work plan development processes are complete, the meeting schedule should reflect work plan priorities. It is expected that Advisory Councils will meet no more frequently than four times a year with the discretion to hold meetings over one to two days. Advanced notice of meetings is required to support participation. Opportunity for meetings to occur outside of Darwin can be explored by the Advisory Council and supported where practicable within the Northern Territory.

Communication

Effective communication between the Advisory Council, community and consumers is vital to its success.

The Disability Advisory Council will aim to:

- create strong links with local, regional and other community and consumer groups to facilitate their input to the Advisory Council
- provide a positive profile of the Advisory Council to assist it in achieving its objectives
- provide the community with access to up-to-date information on Advisory Council activities.

Media guidelines

A positive relationship with the media can enable the Disability Advisory Council to inform the broader community about health and consumer issues and the work of the Advisory Council.

In relation to media comment Advisory Council members should be aware of the sensitive nature or confidentiality of an issue that might be raised. Media issues should be discussed with the Chairperson and Department of Health and Community Services media liaison to identify the best person and approach for involving the media. The Director of Aged and Disability should be notified of media communication in advance wherever possible.

GLOSSARY

Advisory Councils	Disability Advisory Councils
Agency representative	An employee, or a person from an agency that seeks to represent that agency on the Disability Advisory Council.
Community member	A person who wishes to represent a broad or specific community perspective other than that of a disability consumer on the Disability Advisory Council
Consumer member	A person who either directly or indirectly (through a family member or friend) makes use of disability services in the Northern Territory and wishes to bring to the Disability Advisory Council a consumer perspective.
Disability Service provider	Any person providing disability or related services.
Minister	Minister for Family and Community Services.