

# RESEARCH & POLICYCENTRE

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# Speakers

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Talking about the experience “on the ground”	Talking about the link between policy and practice	Talking about detailed policy document analysis

# Our topic today....

Will the NDIS policy around inclusion and capacity building translation into practice on the ground for Local Area Coordination (LAC) services?

To do this we want to look at:

- Policy documents that underpin the NDIS
- Our experience 'on the ground' with LAC staff

What we want from you....

- Reflection on the history of similar policy documents and their [in]effective translation into policy
- Practical solutions and suggestions to address the need within a service setting

# Where did this topic come from?

- BSL has been operating an LAC in the North East Melbourne Area region since July 2016
- LACs support participants to develop and implement plans as well as work to build individual and community capacity to life the inclusion and participation rate and make communities more welcoming and inclusive.
- We are running a developmental evaluation to support the ongoing implementation and roll-out of LAC.
- We observed as part of this work that there appeared to be a gap between policy “wishes” and practice.
- ...and we felt like we had seen this policy/practice translation conundrum before!
- So we wanted to know how “community”, “inclusion” and “capacity building” are defined and implemented within the NDIS;
  - in the policy; and
  - in practice, in the LAC role.

Situation: The NDIS wants to improve the inclusion and participation of people with disability

Complication: These goals are well known for not translating well from policy to practice but they are vital for the NDIS ongoing sustainability and justification. Further, in a pressured implementation environment, non-concrete goals can become a secondary delivery focus.

The existing policy documentation landscape produces an almost incomprehensible policy platform

Without practical guidance staff struggle to what to do and where to put their effort

Implementation pressures can play a significant role in undermining the ability to leverage organisational knowledge

Answer: Policy documentation is not practical enough to translate into practice. These ideas need meaningful dedicated resources, meaningful definitions, practice guidance, training and outcomes measurement

# The NDIS is underpinned by a citizenship-based approach to disability policy.

“building inclusive communities”

And

“community capacity building”

are central ideas in many of the NDIS’ documents that underpin the scheme.

Why do these terms matter to the NDIS?

- People with disabilities overall experience lower levels of active community inclusion and labour market participation, and are more likely to face significant socio-economic disadvantages.
- Making communities more inclusive is a way a way to empower people with disabilities’ active participation in their local communities and broader society.

*Six of the nine objects of the NDIS Act relate to “community”, “inclusion” and/or “capacity building”.*

## Section 3

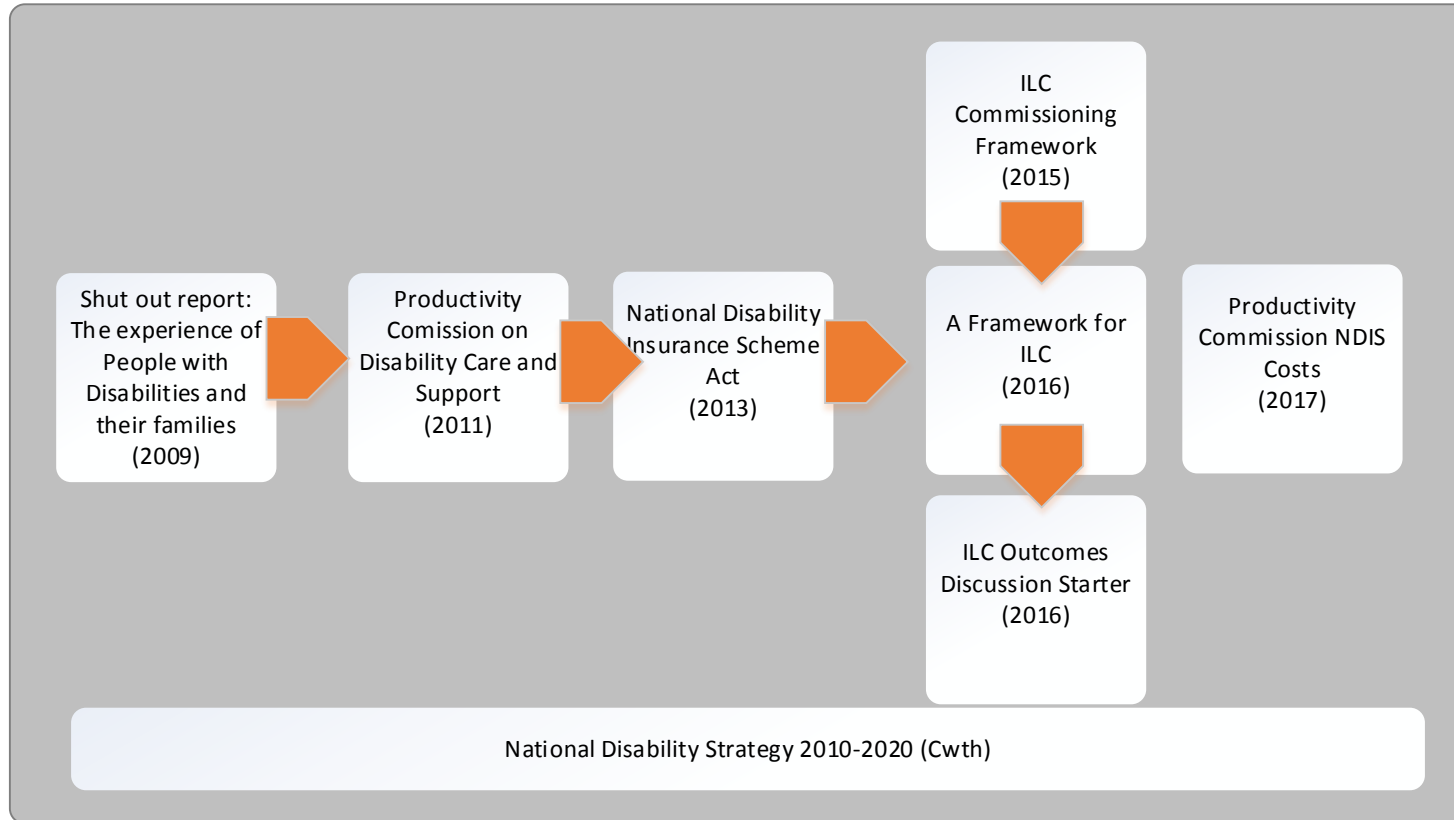
### Part 2—Objects and principles

#### 3 Objects of Act

(1) The objects of this Act are to:

- (a) in conjunction with other laws, give effect to Australia’s obligations under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities done at New York on 13 December 2006 ([2008] ATS 12); and
- (b) provide for the National Disability Insurance Scheme in Australia; and
- (c) support the independence and social and economic participation of people with disability; and
- (d) provide reasonable and necessary supports, including early intervention supports, for participants in the National Disability Insurance Scheme launch; and
- (e) enable people with disability to exercise choice and control in the pursuit of their goals and the planning and delivery of their supports; and
- (f) facilitate the development of a nationally consistent approach to the access to, and the planning and funding of, supports for people with disability; and
- (g) promote the provision of high quality and innovative supports that enable people with disability to maximise independent lifestyles and full inclusion in the mainstream community; and
- (h) raise community awareness of the issues that affect the social and economic participation of people with disability, and facilitate greater community inclusion of people with disability; and
- (i) in conjunction with other laws, give effect to certain obligations that Australia has as a party to:
  - (i) the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights done at New York on 16 December 1966 ([1980] ATS 23); and

# The NDIS is underpinned by a number of key documents that were analysed



# Policy document findings

- “Individual capacity building” is largely represented consistently across the documents, as:
  - building towards individual goals;
  - building general skills that will develop peoples’ independence.
- It can be argued that this is a much simpler concept than community capacity building because “community” has far more varied possible meanings.
- The different policy documents present these topics with different emphases. For example:
  - the NDIS Act 2013 does not explicitly identify “community” capacity building;
  - the 2011 Productivity Commission report that largely informed the Act makes many specific mentions of the term, distinct from individual capacity building;
  - the various ILC documents outline very detailed community capacity building outcomes, also distinct from individual capacity building.



## Policy document findings (2)

- “Inclusion” tends to be represented quite generally in the policy literature given the scheme’s nation-wide scope.
- The increased inclusion of people with disabilities is (sometimes implicitly, sometimes explicitly) identified as requiring:
  - the assistance of individuals to be more included; *and*
  - working to make communities and environments more inclusive for all people.
- Therefore, inclusion within the current model requires effective individual *and* community capacity building.
  - could also suggest that this requires organisational capacity building as well.

*The NDIS’ focus upon outcomes represents a ‘**black box**’ approach to policy outsourcing, where a government purchaser outsources to a contractor without providing detailed procedural guidelines. In theory this will make contractors develop their own efficient and innovative processes for achieving those outcomes.*

## Focus group findings

Focus group sessions were conducted with staff at two of BSL's LAC sites.

- LACs expressed strong understandings of “community”, “inclusion” and “capacity building” in theory.
  - “community”, “inclusion” and “capacity building” in general were understood as meaning different things to different people and in different contexts;
  - “individual capacity building” was clearly understood as part of the NDIS planning process – building the capacity of an individual to successfully pursue pre-defined goals.
- Participants were confused as to the scope and nature of “community capacity building” within their roles

# Poorly defined terms in the policy do not translate into practice

- There is a significant disconnect between the theoretical presentations in the policy and the practical applicability in LAC of ‘community’, ‘inclusion’ and ‘capacity building’.
  - most evident in LACs’ confusion over what ‘community capacity building’ means in the specific context of their role.
- LACs mentioned the organisation’s community engagement training was unclear and abstract. This suggests that the translation of these ideas into practice is confounded by the **abstract and inconsistent definitions and emphases of these terms in the policy.**
- Therefore – **there is insufficient guidance available for applying these conceptual ideas to practice.**

# Staff struggle to know where to focus their effort without clear guidance

- LACs identified that their KPIs were planning-focused and consequently, **planning always takes precedence over community engagement.**
- The lack of clear measurement and evaluation frameworks for these citizenship-based ideas and objectives in the policy means that **there is not an appropriate standard against which to measure these objective areas.**
  - making it difficult for an organisation to identify objectives that it will be able to successfully pursue.

# Implementation can significantly undermine the ability to leverage organisational knowledge

- LAC is largely being operated in isolation from the rest of the organisation.
- LACs have had very limited or no scope to take advantage of the organisation's pre-existing contacts and connections. These existing networks were a key reason why well-established community organisations like BSL were been awarded LAC contracts.

# How can “community”, “inclusion” and “capacity building” be better defined *and* implemented within the NDIS?”

There is a need for:

1. A practically-focused, process-oriented practice guide that will provide procedural links between the theoretical and practical application of these ideas.
2. Clearer measurement and evaluation frameworks to ensure that ‘community’, ‘inclusion’ and ‘capacity building’ processes and goals are clearly understood. These ideas need to have greater presence and priority in LAC KPIs, which could be mandated in the awarding of future LAC contracts.
3. LAC organisations need to consider how the LACs can be integrated into the broader organisation in intentional ways so that participants can leverage the local connections from the day the doors open.

Others?

# Questions for discussion

- How does using a 'black box' approach affect the translation of ideas like those discussed here from policy into practice?
- What should the role of LAC be as an intermediary between the NDIS and ILC?
- How do you practically connect the focus of LAC on individual inclusion and capacity building efforts to broader community engagement and influence?
- What could potentially inform the design of measurement and evaluation frameworks for NDIS objective areas related to these ideas?