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**AMSANT POSITION STATEMENT**

**Disability and the NDIS in the Northern Territory**

December 2024

In August 2024, the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance NT (AMSANT) commissioned a Project to understand the level and quality of disability services received by Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory (NT). The Project Report*, Improving Disability Services for Aboriginal People with a Disability in the NT,* highlights a number of significant issues with poor availability, inequitable access to, and quality of, disability services for Aboriginal people in the NT. It identified highly concerning instances of abuse, neglect and sharp provider practices that Aboriginal people continue to face. It highlighted a shortage of culturally competent providers, with Aboriginal people subjected to culturally unsafe practices and services.

Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Services (ACCHSs) achieve the strongest outcomes for our communities across the holistic model of care that includes health, social and emotional wellbeing. Community-control is the most culturally secure model of choice and control for Aboriginal people with disability; however, the metrocentric design of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and funding structures are major barriers to ACCHSs becoming NDIS providers.

AMSANT seeks the support of the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) and relevant state and federal governments to provide the right conditions for ACCHSs to enter and sustain disability service provision. Specifically, AMSANT seeks the following:

* Resource the Aboriginal community-controlled sector to participate in all disability reform activities at a national and local level; and involve local ACCHSs in planning local funding approaches/market interventions.
* Commit to tailored place-based funding approaches, that include capacity-building/transition funding for providers as well as ongoing, flexible block funding to enable providers to deliver place-based, culturally safe supports where they are needed, in a sustainable way. Preference ACCHSs and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCOs) to deliver services.
* Work with the sector to develop and fund localised workforce strategies to support Aboriginal worker recruitment and training.
* Fund neurodevelopmental assessment across the NT, allowing our most vulnerable people to have access to the scheme.
* Develop new NDIS Practice Standards that specifically protect the cultural safety of all Aboriginal people with disability when interacting with mainstream disability services. Enabling use of interpreters is one important aspect of this.
* Address the chronic lack of community information and understanding, and avenues for access, evidence and assessments for Aboriginal people (particularly regional and remote) to ensure equitable access and services (including reviewing the current Remote Community Connector Model and funding).