SUMMARY OF THEMES

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The following provides a summary of the key themes raised during this project by the Community Advisory Group of newly arrived people from Iraq and Syria who are living with disabilities and their carers.

Knowledge, understanding and navigation of services

- People from refugee backgrounds living with disabilities and their carers have a lack of knowledge of available services and the practical supports provided.
- There are many difficulties navigating health, settlement and disability service systems, and this is particularly difficult for people who are newly arrived and living with disabilities or caring for someone with a disability.

Impact of previous experiences, including trauma

- Previous experiences, including torture and other traumatic events, impact on individuals and families and their ability to navigate to appropriate services and systems.
- Ability and confidence to advocate and self-advocate for accessible and appropriate services can be impacted by cultural concepts and experiences of disability as well as the impact of trauma experienced by people from refugee backgrounds.
- Opportunities to engage in meaningful dialogue with service providers enable people from refugee backgrounds living with disabilities and their carers to make a contribution, feel cared for and support recovery from torture and other traumatic events.

Engagement of services with people from refugee backgrounds

- Services need to be more active in their engagement with people from refugee backgrounds living with disabilities and their carers to better understand, respond to and meet their needs.
- Services need to ‘go where people are’ to enable engagement with and inclusion of people from refugee backgrounds living with disabilities and their carers.

Frustrations with workers, services and systems

- Inconsistent information and contradictory messages from some workers about services and supports is frustrating.
- There is perceived lack of competence and experience of some workers, including interpreters, when working with people from refugee backgrounds living with disabilities and their carers.

Complaints and feedback

- Community advisers did not know how to make complaints or provide feedback when services did not meet their needs.
- Language was identified as a significant barrier to making complaints and providing feedback to a range of services.

Language

- Language barriers impact on many aspects of daily life, including access to the healthcare system and understanding of services and systems.
- Service providers need to consider religious and cultural backgrounds of interpreters as well as dialect and gender and this is particularly important for people from refugee backgrounds living with disabilities and their carers.
- Interpreters need experience and sensitivity when working with people from refugee backgrounds living with disabilities and their carers.

For the Arabic translation, please refer to the Arabic text.
### Waiting times and prioritisation
- Waiting times for assessments, NDIS, Disability Support Pension applications and services is difficult for people who are newly arrived from refugee backgrounds living with disabilities.
- Newly arrived people from refugee backgrounds living with disabilities and their carers need greater prioritisation for assessments and services.

### Skills, knowledge, confidence and desire to advocate
- There are a number of barriers to advocacy and self-advocacy for people from refugee backgrounds living with disabilities and their carers. The barriers vary and include language, skills, knowledge and confidence despite the desire and need to advocate individually and systemically.

### National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)
- There is confusion and a lack of clear information about NDIS processes, including waiting times.
- Some community advisors report inconsistent and inaccurate advice from service providers relating to the NDIS.
- There are mixed messages within the community about NDIS plans and perceived fairness of NDIS packages.
- Community advisors state that the NDIS model does not consider the whole family and the additional needs of families who are newly arrived from refugee backgrounds that impact on family functioning and resettlement.
- There is recognition that the NDIS is a new system and that improvements will occur over time.
- NDIA decision-makers need to hear directly from people of refugee backgrounds living with disabilities and their carers, and provide genuine opportunities for feedback and contribution to service and system improvements.

### Carers
- Caring responsibilities can impact on the settlement of carers from refugee backgrounds. This includes ability to attend English classes and subsequently find employment and access citizenship.
- The emotional and social support needs of carers from refugee backgrounds can be unmet.
- There is a lack of awareness of services to support carers as well as a lack of appropriate services for carers from refugee and non-English-speaking backgrounds.

### Willingness and skills to help services
- Community Advisory Group members have a range of experiences, skills and strengths that can be utilised to help Australian services to better meet the needs of people from refugee backgrounds living with disabilities and their carers.
BENEFITS FOR COMMUNITY ADVISERS

Building practical knowledge and skills
• Getting together with other people in similar situations allows practical peer support, learning from each other about navigating, understanding and troubleshooting common problems and challenges with services.

Feeling supported by others in similar situations
• The Community Advisory Group allowed people to feel supported by others in similar situations and to address feelings of isolation and powerlessness.

Experience and confidence to advocate
• Participation in the Community Advisory Group helped to improve knowledge, experience and confidence to advocate and provide feedback to services about how services can better meet the needs of newly arrived people from refugee backgrounds living with disabilities and their carers.

Access to service providers and the importance of being heard
• It is important for service providers and decision-makers to hear directly from people from refugee backgrounds living with disabilities and their carers about their unique needs in order to provide responsive services.
• Being able to engage meaningfully in appropriate feedback processes and dialogue with services is important.
• Documenting meetings and issues raised by community advisers allows sharing with a broader range of services to enable the voices of people from refugee backgrounds living with disabilities and their carers to continue to be raised.

BENEFITS FOR THE BROADER SERVICE SYSTEM

Raising the profile of people from refugee backgrounds living with disabilities
• The advice from the Community Advisory Group was shared throughout the project by community advisers, project facilitators and service providers who attended meetings. This included within the families of community advisers, in service provider networks and meetings, in a submission to the Victorian Government and at the 2018 Refugee Alternatives Conference.

Genuine opportunities to contribute to consultation processes
• The Community Advisory Group model facilitates genuine opportunities to contribute to consultation and feedback processes to improve services and systems for people from refugee backgrounds living with disabilities and their carers who are often excluded from such processes.

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