

**PARLIAMENTARY JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME
ANSWER TO COMMITTEE REQUEST FOR INFORMATION**

Perth Hills Trial Site – Public Hearing – 9 April 2015

Reference No: SQ15-000041

IMPROVING COMMUNICATION WITH PARTICIPANTS

The National Disability Insurance Agency has agreed to provide the following information:
What steps is the Agency taking to improve communication with participants to ensure they are aware of things like home visits and who they can bring to planning discussions?

Answer:

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) is currently reviewing its communication products and processes, including its pre-planning workshops, to ensure participants are aware of who they can bring to the planning conversations and that these can take place in the participant's home. This will be included in factsheets in the participant's planning kit and on the National Disability Insurance Scheme website.

The NDIA has produced 10 publications and factsheets in Easy English, as well as two web pages as an online resource (response to question SQ15-000040 from 27 March 2015 public hearing refers).

The NDIA continues to explore options for providing participant material in accessible formats, including multimedia, animation and other easy read formats. It is anticipated that as new material is released, it will be produced in alternative formats to ensure it is accessible to all audiences.

Staff resources such as *Work practices on determining access and planning with participants* also include details around ensuring staff communicate with participants during their interaction with the NDIA, including providing them with assistance and explaining information as required.

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Reference No: SQ15-000042

STATUS UPDATE ON THE REVIEW OF PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The National Disability Insurance Agency has agreed to provide the following information:
Review of plan implementation (spending by participants and claiming by providers). Provide a status update on the report and provide a copy to the Committee when completed.

Answer:

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) is conducting a review of participant plan implementation. The review will look at spending by participants as well as claiming by providers. The review activities are on track to be concluded by the end of May 2015 and the NDIA will provide a copy of the review to the Committee when completed.

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Perth Hills Trial Site – Public Hearing – 9 April 2015

Reference No: SQ15-000043

NDIS FEATURES IN COMPARISON TO THE WA NDIS MY WAY SCHEME

The National Disability Insurance Agency has agreed to provide the following information:
Provide a brief summary of NDIS features in comparison to the WA NDIS My Way Scheme.

Answer:

The following response outlines key features of the NDIA Perth Hills trial site.

Three NDIS Pillars

The NDIS is underpinned by three main pillars:

- The NDIS is an **insurance** scheme which facilitates access to reasonable and necessary supports for all eligible people with disability and psychosocial disorders.
- The NDIS promotes **choice and control** for participants, families and carers, including choice of goals and aspirations and choice of strategies and supports to achieve goals and address needs. This includes identifying and strengthening the involvement of valued friends, family and community supports in addition to incorporating reasonable and necessary funded supports where needed. It also involves choice about whether to self-manage all or part of their supports or whether to access organisational assistance to do so.
- The NDIS assists in ensuring that **mainstream services**, including health, education, transport, justice, child protection and sport and recreation, continue to facilitate access and services to people with disability and psychosocial disorders.

The planning and implementation process for NDIS participants operationalises the three pillars.

Bringing in Participants

In WA, people who were formerly registered with My Way Coordinators from the state Disability Services Commission (DSC) have been invited to become NDIS participants during the first year of the trial. These participants have automatic access to the NDIS and have been gradually transitioned based on their geographical location, starting with the City of Swan, moving to the Shire of Kalamunda and concluding with the Shire of Mundaring. Participants do not have the option of remaining in the previous state system. Most people with previous My Way Coordinators are now accessing the NDIS; a small number are still being phased in.

People receiving other DSC funded supports that were not connected to My Way Coordinators have been invited to become participants since April 2015, once again on a geographical basis.

All other people who wish to access the NDIS are required to make an access request and an access decision is made within 21 days. People not involved with the DSC and currently receiving services from programs such as Better Start for Children with Disability, Helping Children with Autism, Disability Employment Programs, Home and Community Care and specific Mental Health programs have been gradually invited to apply for access to the NDIS from July 2014 and continue to be transitioned. People who are not known to any previous disability services and are found eligible have generally been able to access the NDIS soon after the time they make contact.

The Planning Process

Prior to attending a planning meeting, all participants are strongly encouraged to attend free information sessions about the NDIS and how to prepare for a planning conversation. A Planning Workbook, sent to participants by post and discussed at the information session, also helps participants to identify their needs, goals and current supports together with the additional or changed supports required to meet their goals. The needs, strengths and capacities of family and carers are also considered as part of the planning and assessment process.

Participant planning meetings can be held at a National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) office, at the participant's home or at another venue preferred by the participant.

Participants can invite whoever they choose into the meeting to support them, including family members, friends, therapists, carers or support workers.

A local Planning and Support Coordinator meets with the participant, usually between one and three times, to develop an agreed plan. The final plan is written in the participant's voice and summarises goals and aspirations, informal and funded supports to achieve goals, and a statement of flexible and fixed funding, if needed.

Participants choose the providers they wish to use. Participants can access a list of registered providers and the supports they provide from their planner, from the NDIS website, or they may choose to phone or meet with providers. Participants who self-manage their funds can receive supports from providers who are not registered with the NDIA.

Plans are reviewed annually at the local trial site, but can be reviewed at any time if participant circumstances change.

Fund Management

Participants choose if they would like to self-manage their funds, have the NDIA hold their funds while providers make claims against their pool of funds (Agency managed), or nominate a provider to assist with fund management on their behalf (Registered Plan Management Agency). Some participants use a combination of methods.

If the plan is managed through an NDIA provider, claims can be made online and will be paid within two working days or by written invoice, which may take up to 30 days for payment. Plans managed through a plan management provider have the plan management provider arrange to pay the provider directly.

Participants who self-manage their plans will be paid one month in advance directly into their bank accounts. This needs to be a separate bank account to NDIS payments and expenditure. Once the participant provides a statement of expenditure against their plan the NDIA will pay that amount into their bank account so they can pay their bills as they come in. Participants who self-manage need to organise the method of payment with their chosen provider.

Additional Planning Support

Participants who are facing major life transitions, for example moving out of the family home, leaving school or facing the death of a family carer, may participate in a more comprehensive planning process known as Personal Futures Planning. A skilled facilitator will assist the participant to explore their goals and aspirations in depth together with key people in the participant's life. This plan will, in turn, help to inform the NDIA plan and supports needed.

Support to Manage Plans

The Planning and Support Coordinator is the key NDIA contact for participants as they implement their plan. Participants receive a Plan Implementation pack and are strongly encouraged to attend a plan implementation workshop run by the NDIA. Participants receive follow up phone calls to ensure they are confident with implementing their plan. Workshops for participants who wish to self-manage their funding are also offered each week.

If a participant requires additional support to coordinate the various supports in their plan, a Support Coordinator can be funded as part of their plan. A Support Coordinator may be required for several months to help establish the plan and build capacity for the participant to better manage their plan. In circumstances where a participant requires ongoing support, a Support Coordinator is funded for several hours each week for the duration of the plan. Support Coordinators with specialist qualifications can be funded where participant circumstances are complex.

Ongoing Contact

Participants and their families receive regular updates from the trial site via email or post and are invited to celebrate key events, such as the International Day of People with Disability.

Workshops are offered regularly, for example 'How to assist your son or daughter to transition from school to employment' and 'Building community links'.

Future Approach

It is anticipated that the current Perth Hills trial will be strengthened by the addition of a complementary Local Area Coordination (LAC) model as part of the Information Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) approach proposed as part of the full scheme model. The addition of this approach will enable many people with disability to form a relationship with a LAC prior to entering the NDIA. This relationship will assist them to develop community links and to explore the informal and formal supports that are needed to progress toward their goals and aspirations. Those people that take the next step to enter the Scheme will maintain their LAC relationship through the journey. Under this approach the key relationship for most people entering the Scheme will be with an LAC rather than with a Planning and Support Coordinator.

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Reference No: SQ15-000044

ADE PRICING

The National Disability Insurance Agency has agreed to provide the following information:
Question on ADE pricing taken on notice in Busselton on 8 April 2015 (Page 20 of 8 April Hansard refers)

Answer:

Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs) which transition into the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) are paid for existing supported employees at the Disability Maintenance Instrument (DMI) amount assessed for each employee under pre-existing arrangements with the Department of Social Services (DSS). For new and additional supported employees, ADEs are able to claim the rate which was assessed by DSS as the 'average DMI level' for the ADE over the previous two years. As a result, each and every ADE has an individual average ADE level applied for future NDIS reference which reflects the relevant support levels required of the enterprise.

DSS is advising the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) of the amounts to be paid to each ADE based on their historical payment data.

The key benefit to ADEs in transitioning into the NDIS is the ability to attract and employ additional people over and above the previously capped places that were formerly funded by DSS. This will be important for ADEs considering an expansion of contracts or entering into new areas of business.

It will also allow greater flexibility for participants who can be assured of their ability to be re-employed in an ADE, should an attempt to enter open employment not work out for them.

Whilst the NDIA will utilise the historical data from DSS to structure payments to ADEs over the transition period, the NDIA itself will be working during that time to develop a funding model for ADEs that allows appropriate remuneration for the effort involved in ensuring people with disability can access a range of employment opportunities. The aim is to ensure that ADEs have the ability to provide capacity building that will enable their employees to expand their work ability and transition to open employment where possible.

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Reference No: SQ15-000045

SUPPORT FOR SELF-MANAGING PARTICIPANTS

The National Disability Insurance Agency has agreed to provide the following information:
What support does the NDIA offer to self-managing participants?

Answer:

One of the central tenets of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is for participants to have choice and control. The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) allows participants to choose who manages the funding provided in their plan.

NDIA staff members work with and provide support to participants who choose to self-manage some or all of their NDIS funding. SQ15-000047 outlines further information about shared management and some of the work the Agency is doing to assist participants decide how they would like to manage their funding.

The resources currently available on the NDIS website are:

- Self-managing funds for supports in my plan;
www.ndis.gov.au/document/667
- A guide to engaging your own support workers; and
www.ndis.gov.au/document/450
- The NDIA Participant Portal User Guide including a module for online claiming.
www.ndis.gov.au/participant-portal-user-guide

In addition, a self-management booklet is being developed by a participant's mother, with input from NDIA staff and people with disability, which works through the various aspects of self-management and includes the following documents:

- Self-managing my NDIS budget;
- Self-management claiming and reporting information;
- Directly engaging my own staff; and
- Starting a small business as a support worker.

These documents are currently in their final stage of approval and will be uploaded to the NDIS website shortly.

The NDIS Participant Portal

The NDIS Participant Portal has recently been enhanced to support improved information on the plan and introduce online claiming for participants. Participants can see the supports they are self-managing listed, view all claims made against their plan and have their online claims processed.

The online claiming function has significantly reduced the paperwork for self-managing and has sped up the payment process from over a week to submit a claim and receive payment, to overnight processing. This ensures payment within two to three business days.

Instructions for the Participant Portal are available on the NDIS website as well as a help function within the Portal. A video tour of the Participant Portal is currently being produced. These guide participants through the different functions of the Portal, including the online claiming module.

Should participants or their nominees require further assistance to build their capacity to self-manage, the NDIA can include a Plan Management Provider to support the participant to build their skills in self-management before moving to this option. Other options for building skills to self-manage include the options of self-managing the funds for a specific support with a view to building skills and stepping towards self-managing more items in subsequent plans.

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Reference No: SQ15-000046

UPDATE ON THE NDIA ELIGIBILITY REVIEW

<p>The National Disability Insurance Agency has agreed to provide the following information: Provide an update on the NDIA Eligibility Review</p>

Answer:

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) Quality and Continuous Improvement Team (QCIT) conducts rolling quarterly reviews of ineligible access decisions across all National Disability Insurance Scheme trial sites. The reviews aim to examine access decisions, promoting consistency of evidence based decision making across trial sites. Whilst an Agency function, the QCIT is a National Office team and therefore independent on a day-to-day basis from trial site decision making.

Following the QCIT review, trial sites receive advice regarding ineligible decisions that require further analysis. The QCIT works with trial sites to implement any improvements and assist in ongoing monitoring.

The NDIA commissioned an independent Shadow Review to assess its controls and assurance as a provider of quality services to participants and also its sustainability as an insurance scheme.

The Shadow Review reviewed ineligible access decisions from the first quarter of 2014-15. The sample was selected by the Scheme Actuary, independent of the QCIT and trial sites. The review findings validated the outcomes and improvements identified in the QCIT internal quality reviews.

The ineligible review for the second quarter of 2014-15 is currently being completed.

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Reference No: SQ15-000047

SHARED MANAGEMENT AND INNOVATION ON PLANNING

ASSISTANCE

The National Disability Insurance Agency has agreed to provide the following information:
Provide the Committee with information about shared management and innovation on planning assistance.

Shared management

Shared Management refers to providing options to participants for how they manage funded supports in their plans. As an alternative to Agency management, participants can choose to self-manage or use a plan manager to administer the funding in their plan. They may also elect to use a combination of these options.

As at 31 December 2014, 67 per cent of plans were Agency managed; 4 per cent were solely self-managed, and 29 per cent used a combination of Agency management and self-management.

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) is working to simplify systems and develop resources that allow greater flexibility for participants to manage the funding in their plans. Providers are encouraged to assist participants to develop their skills in managing all or parts of their plan.

To assist in this area, the NDIA has recently commenced convening self-help groups for people who wish to explore or begin to manage their own funds. These groups allow participants to learn about what resources are available to them and to learn from each other.

Participant focus groups are also informing NDIA process and product improvement for self-management options.

The NDIA will also include funds for specific supports in a person's plan that will assist participants to build competency in managing how their supports are delivered and how the funds are managed.

Planning by providers

The NDIA has funded a number of grassroots community organisations to act as Disability Support Organisations (DSOs). Each DSO will work with people with disability and their families and carers to make the most of opportunities presented by the National Disability Insurance Scheme and engage effectively with the Scheme.

Each DSO will facilitate and support up to 20 local peer support or mutual support groups. The support groups will provide information and resources and build community networks between participants. The type and structure of the local support groups will be determined by DSOs in consultation with the NDIA.

In addition, provider input to the plan preparation and the planning process is supported by the NDIA where the participant wants the provider to be involved.

Once funds are in a plan, providers can then work with the participant to establish the best way to have their supports delivered.

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Reference No: SQ15-000048

PARTICIPANT FUNDS ACCESS STATISTICS

<p>The National Disability Insurance Agency has agreed to provide the following information: Provide statistics of participants accessing their funds, including frequency of access.</p>

Answer:

As at 22 March 2015, 42 per cent of participants with approved plans had at least one claim submitted for services provided. This equates to 229 plans out of a total 545. There are 316 plans with no claims submitted.

The Western Australian (WA) trial site is conducting a review of all plans that have no claims submitted. The review will involve contact with participants to identify barriers to plan implementation. Trial site staff will be allocated where necessary to provide assistance to participants to implement their plans.

The WA trial site has conducted provider forums in March and May 2015 to assist providers with claiming issues.

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Reference No: SQ15-000049

WORK CURRENTLY BEING CONDUCTED ON AUTISM AND OTHER EXPERT WORK

The National Disability Insurance Agency has agreed to provide the following information:
Provide the Committee with an update on work currently being conducted on autism and other expert work.

Answer:

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) currently has four projects addressing issues for early childhood intervention, with the aim to develop effective approaches to funding of appropriate supports. The four projects are:

- development of national guidelines for early childhood intervention;
- best practice in autism;
- early childhood intervention (hearing loss); and
- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders.

Development of national guidelines for early childhood intervention

The NDIA has contracted Early Childhood Intervention Australia (ECIA) to develop recommended guidelines for early childhood intervention within the context of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The initial phase of this project is underway and involves wide-ranging consultations. Workshops are scheduled across Australia to invite input into a scoping exercise to identify characteristics of good practice, including outcome measures and guidelines that are used across jurisdictions. These consultations will form the basis of a discussion paper/proposal outlining a framework for adoption of guidelines on a national basis. Recommendations will be made for the development of resources and tools that detail the collaborative approach preferred for early childhood intervention. The project is ongoing until the end of 2015.

Best practice in autism

The project was established to advise the NDIA on approaches to support good practice for early intervention with children who have been or may be diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Consultants engaged to undertake the research and prepare guidance for the NDIA are:

- Professor Katrina Williams, Developmental Medicine, University of Melbourne;
- Professor Jacqueline Roberts, Autism, Griffith University; and
- Professor Margot Prior, Professorial Fellow, University of Melbourne.

The project receives input from a stakeholder group, drawn from a broad range of interests in ASD, including parents, practitioners and researchers, with aims to:

- provide advice on the research questions to address the development of guidelines for the NDIA;
- review progress of the project, through consideration and discussion of reports provided by the project group;
- act in an advisory capacity to the NDIA during the project; and
- review and comment on the outcomes of the project.

The report by the consultants is due by end June for consideration by the Agency.

Early childhood intervention (hearing loss)

An expert panel has been convened to:

- advise on the best available contemporary evidence to inform NDIA early childhood intervention (hearing loss) policy and guidelines;
- assist in the development of guidance to improve the capacity of NDIA staff to understand and apply this evidence to access and planning decisions; and
- build effective relationships between the NDIA and key providers of early childhood diagnosis and intervention for hearing loss in each state to ensure a nationally consistent, evidence informed hearing loss strategy

To date, two meetings have been held, including a face to face meeting on 31 March 2015. Ongoing work is proceeding.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD)

FASD has been identified as an issue relevant for the NDIS. In the Barkly region, the impact of FASD is linked to alcohol use in the community, specifically high level intake by pregnant women. Impairment resulting from pre-birth exposure to alcohol falls within a spectrum of severity, including physical features, intellectual function and central nervous system impairment.

The NDIA has engaged Telethon Kids Institute (based in Western Australia) to undertake a project to:

- conduct a comprehensive review of the available information, both published and unpublished, on features of FASD across the lifespan, and services and supports for people living with FASD. The review will inform the development of draft best practice guidelines for NDIA planners;
- develop a draft functional severity index for people with FASD to assist planners in decision making around the level and type of services and supports required;
- estimate service costs and workforce requirements for evidence based programs and programs that are showing promise as effective approaches to FASD – related disabilities; and
- present these draft guidelines and functional severity index for assessment by an expert panel.

The project is led by Dr James Fitzpatrick, McCusker Clinical Research Fellow in Aboriginal Child Health. The project includes targeted consultation with key stakeholders. The timeframe for the completion of the project is the end of June 2015.