

Senate Estimates

Community Affairs committee – Additional Estimates Spillover Hearing Opening statement – 18 March 2024

Thank you Chair and committee for inviting us to appear today. I will make some brief opening comments.

On Friday 16 February, the Agency published its second quarterly report for 2023/24 on the NDIS website.

The report shows progress on a number of measures that are at the core of the Agency's work and are designed to make a difference for participants, families and carers.

It remains paramount that in considering the success of the program that the agency is focused on our investment in the 646,000 participants in the scheme and providing the significant benefit they receive from the work of the agency greater choice and control in their lives.

The Financial Sustainability Report for the December quarter shows Scheme expenses for the first six months of the year were at \$20.4 billion. This is 1.9% higher than projections from June.

This has been caused by a slight increase in the number of scheme participants, which brings it 0.5% above the projections, with a significant increase in the number of participants with developmental delay.

The report also shows that there remain challenges in increased average plan budgets and payments for participants.

We are seeing a stabilisation in the growth rate of the scheme. This is being achieved through considered and targeted reforms – delivered in partnership with people with disability and the disability community.

The rollout of the PACE IT system will help drive a consistent and more seamless experience for participants across Australia.

The NDIA is optimistic the Scheme is on track to reach the agreed National Cabinet's annual growth target of 8% by 1 July 2026, with further moderation of growth expected from NDIS Review reforms.

Changes in legislative and policy settings arising from NDIS Review recommendations are anticipated to lead to further moderation in Scheme growth.

The NDIA is partnering with the disability community on the Reform for Outcomes program to implement Government's reforms in improving the effectiveness and sustainability of the NDIS and uplift the NDIA's capability, capacity and systems to better support NDIS participants.

Additionally there is a focus on responding to the increased demand for support in early childhood for those experiencing developmental delay.

Separately the Agency has embarked on a targeted program of work to ensure that every dollar invested in the scheme is being used where it is needed.

We are seeing progress in a number of key activities aimed at improving the experience of scheme participants.

Through all this we are driven by the extraordinary impact that the scheme has on individuals.

More than 3 quarters of all participants aged over 15 years reported greater choice and control in their lives and more than two out of five participants aged 15 years and older have reported increased participation in community and social activities.

Participation in work has more than doubled for those aged 15 to 24, and half of all parents and carers are now reporting paid employment, reaching the 2023–24 target of 50%.

And importantly the NDIS is valued by our community at large. Research conducted by the Agency across two periods last year showed strong support for the concept and intent of the scheme. It showed unity in the vision we all have about giving all Australians the tools they need to live their best life.

These signs give just a glimpse of the positive work the Agency is helping to facilitate in every community across the country.

Thank you again for the invitation to appear today.