

## Opening Statement

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**Robert De Luca**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**National Disability Insurance Agency**

I would like to take this opportunity to provide some brief remarks in relation to how the NDIS is rolling out for participants.

The NDIS has grown from approximately 30,000 participants after a three year trial period ending 30 June 2016, to now more than 250,000 participants – an increase of more than 700 per cent in just two and a half years. Approximately 78,000 of those participants – almost 1 in 3 – are receiving supports and services for the very first time.

The provider market has grown from around 3,500 registered providers in June 2016 to more than 19,000 in December 2018 - an increase of over 450 per cent. As at 31 December 2018, over 45 per cent of these providers were sole traders or individuals.

And the NDIA has grown its workforce from approximately 2,300 at the start of transition to now over 10,000. An increase of over 330 per cent.

This is an unprecedented scale up of the disability sector in Australia. And, for the most part, it is delivering life changing results for over quarter of a million Australians with disability.

This significant growth has been delivered while at the same time seeing strong participant satisfaction results. Between 83 and 88 per cent of participants have rated their experience with the NDIS as “good” or “very good” during transition.

Almost three years into full scheme roll out of the NDIS, all states and territories have entered the Scheme on time and as scheduled. Western Australia will be fully available on 1 July 2019, as scheduled.

Despite this, the number of participants entering the NDIS are lower than originally estimated by the Productivity Commission.

The original Productivity Commission figures were always estimates, based on data provided by States, Territories and the Commonwealth. Through experience, we have learned that:

- The data provided by jurisdictions and the Commonwealth represented their very best estimates, but the consistency and quality of this data has varied.
- Despite best efforts to reach Australians who may be eligible for the Scheme, there are some people who remain difficult to contact.

During transition, the bilateral estimates across the states and territories (excluding trial) was ~377,000 to 30 June 2019. The number of actionable records received by the NDIA was ~278,000, leaving a difference of ~99,000 records. These ~99,000 records included duplicates, deceased individuals, or information that did not allow the NDIA to identify or contact individuals.

I can reassure the Committee and the community that for every participant with an actionable record, the NDIA is on track to bring these people into the Scheme, as planned. In addition, we continue to bring in a large number of new participants who have never before received funding. Further, we will continue to work with community organisations and states and territories to contact eligible people.

It is our experience that, in some locations where the NDIS has fully matured, the number of participants entering has, over time, reached the original estimates. We are also seeing at more mature sites that as participants grow in confidence, their use of NDIS plan funding increases. Experience shows that participants on average use 50 per cent of their funding in their first plan, which increases to 74 per cent by their fourth plan. This is to be expected in such a large-scale shift from block funding, to a system centered on participant choice and control.

We continue to manage the Scheme and Agency within budget. Our expenditure aligns with the growth of participants and is primarily directed to our staff and partner costs which represents around 60 per cent of total Agency expenditure, while contractors and consultants represent less than 20 per cent. We are growing our workforce capability at the same time of reducing reliance on consultants, with a decrease of over 50 per cent in consultant spend in the last 12 months.

While we know that many people have had a positive experience with the NDIS and their lives have improved since joining the Scheme, we are also absolutely committed to making the necessary adjustments and improvements to the NDIS for those who have not had a positive experience.

I would like to reassure the Committee that we are absolutely committed to supporting participants to enter and access the NDIS as quickly as possible. There is no backlog of access requests preventing people entering the NDIS.

The median wait time for access in the December 2018 quarter was 2 days, for receiving an approved plan was 120 days and for a plan review was 34 days. We recognise that for some participants the timeframes are slower than they should be and we are taking a number of actions to address. This includes, streamlining the process to get Assistive Technology funding in plans, increasing resourcing and training for our partners and planners, whilst working with local organisations to grow more vibrant and innovative markets, including in rural and remote locations.

The Agency remains committed to work closely with the sector to deliver on the NDIS vision, including the Independent Advisory Council, Participant Reference Group and Industry Reference Group.

I would like to thank the Committee for their ongoing support for the Scheme and people with disability, their families and carers. I look forward to your questions.