



Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme
Answer to Question on Notice

General issues around the implementation and performance of the NDIS

Reference No: SQ19-000008

INELIGIBILITY RATE FOR PEOPLE WITH PSYCHOSOCIAL DISABILITY

Hearing: N/A

Question:

What is the current ineligibility rate from access requests from people with a primary psychosocial disability compared to other primary disability types?

Answer:

As at 30 September 2018, of the total access requests from people with 'psychosocial disability' as their primary disability, 36 per cent were found ineligible. This compares with an overall rate of 14 per cent of total access requests resulting in an 'ineligible' decision. However, factors other than disability are contributing to some of this difference – in particular, age and whether or not the participants were in state/territory defined programs.¹

Specifically, potential participants with psychosocial primary disability are more likely to have an older age profile than the Scheme average, for a variety of reasons including that general practice within the sector is that diagnosis and assessment of psychosocial disability at a young age is rare as most practitioners are reluctant to diagnose mental health conditions or confirm likely permanence of impairment until adulthood. In addition, potential participants who did not previously receive disability services from state, territory or Commonwealth disability programs (whether defined or non-defined) have lower eligibility rates. Potential participants with psychosocial primary disability are also more likely to have not received disability supports previously.

Hence, this difference in ineligibility rates needs to be treated with caution as age and previous access to services has driven some of the difference.

¹ A defined program is a state, territory or Commonwealth disability program described under list C in the Operational Guidelines as having the same disability requirements as the NDIS.



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Reference No: SQ19-000009

MENTAL HEALTH FUNCTIONAL ASSESSMENT TOOL

Hearing: N/A

Question:

In its response to the rec 4 of the Provision of services under the NDIS for people with psychosocial disabilities related to a mental health condition, the Australian Government stated that it agreed that a standardised assessment tool could address concerns held by mental health service providers that NDIS eligibility criteria is unclear and inconsistently applied. It advised that the NDIA was progressing the selection of an existing appropriate functional assessment tool, which was expected to be progressively introduced from early 2018. Has an appropriate functional assessment tool been selected and implemented?

Answer:

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) continues to trial appropriate functional assessment tools for people with psychosocial disabilities related to a mental health condition.

This includes the Life Skills Profile (LSP) assessment tool, which has been included as part of the Independent Assessment Pilot in service delivery areas in New South Wales.

There are three versions of the LSP assessment tool based on the number of questions asked:

- LSP 16;
- LSP 20; and
- LSP 39.

The LSP 16 has been tested in Victoria East and Queensland South, and recently expanded to the Australian Capital Territory.

The Independent Assessment Pilot, which commenced in mid-November 2018, is also currently collecting data on LSP 16 and LSP 39 in order to further test the tool.

The LSP assessment tool has been communicated to the mental health sector as a preferred assessment tool for inclusion in evidence for access to the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

NDIA staff and partners have been able to record an LSP 16 score in the ICT system from 2 February 2018.



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Reference No: SQ19-000010

NDIA TEAMS SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH PSYCHOSOCIAL DISABILITY

Hearing: N/A

Question:

[Ref: Provision of services under the NDIS for people with psychosocial disabilities related to a mental health condition – Report tabled 15 August 2017]

In relation to rec 9 which was supported by the Australian Government, are there specific teams in place nationally to support people with a psychosocial disability? If so, what proportion of NDIA staff are employed in these teams, and are there specific qualifications required to work in them?

Answer:

The Psychosocial Disability Stream is progressively rolling out across Australia, and has commenced with a focus on access to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) in South Australia and Tasmania. The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) has delivered training on access and psychosocial disability to approximately 1,440 NDIA staff, Local Area Coordinator (LAC) partners and providers nationally during 2018 and continues to support the transition of participants with psychosocial disability to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) through the streamlined access process.

An expert mental health consultant has been engaged by the NDIA to develop a Psychosocial Disability Capability Framework, with anticipated completion by April 2019. This framework will inform the recruitment of staff and requirements to work in specialist roles within the NDIA. Reporting on the proportion of NDIA staff will not be possible until after the completion of the Psychosocial Disability Capability Framework and further rollout of the Psychosocial Disability Stream.

However, the NDIA expects all planners and Local Area Coordinator (LAC) staff to have a contemporary understanding of disability and the impact of a broad range of disabilities on participants' lives, including that of psychosocial disability. Staff are supported in decision-making by a range of technical and operational advice materials, specialists and advisors. Mental health specific practice guidance in both access and planning are available to all NDIA staff and partners.



Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme
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Reference No: SQ19-000011

FLEXIBILITY IN PLANS

Hearing: N/A

Question:

[Ref: Provision of services under the NDIS for people with psychosocial disabilities related to a mental health condition – Report tabled 15 August 2017]

In relation to rec 10, has there been any progress on how to build flexibility in plans to respond to the fluctuating needs of participants with a psychosocial disability? Can adjustments be made without triggering a full plan review?

Answer:

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) updated and distributed internal guidance on planning for people with psychosocial disability in September 2018. This guidance provides specific advice on how to build flexibility into plans in order to respond to fluctuating needs, and how to effectively communicate this flexibility to participants and their supporters.

Planners and Local Area Coordinators carefully consider the impact regular and irregular supports may have on maintaining a participant's wellness. For example, including additional funded supports for domestic assistance, and/or assistance with self-care and community access, could all be integral to supporting the participant to maintain their overall wellness, even if the additional support is only used episodically.

Adjustments can be made to a plan without triggering a full plan review in instances where there is minimal change to the participant's circumstances or a minor change to the plan.

A plan undertaken in these circumstances is still a new plan under the *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013*. However, it is a more streamlined process for the participant and planner to ensure minor changes can be implemented quickly.

The NDIA has established a working group with Mental Health Australia that will provide advice in relation to a range of issues, including the episodic needs of participants with psychosocial disability and plan flexibility.



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Reference No: SQ19-000012

SERVICE GAPS IN RURAL AND REMOTE COMMUNITIES

Hearing: N/A

Question:

[Ref: Provision of services under the NDIS for people with psychosocial disabilities related to a mental health condition – Report tabled 15 August 2017]

In relation to rec 17, has there been any progress in relation to developing an implementation plan to address the challenges and service gaps that exist for rural and remote communities?

Answer:

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) has established a Remote Support and Coordination Branch to develop and support the service delivery framework for remote participants in accordance with the *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013*.

The Remote Support and Coordination Branch is responsible for improving service delivery for participants in remote areas with respect to culture, context and location.

The five main goals of the Branch are to:

1. provide easy access and contact with the NDIA;
2. make effective, appropriate supports available where people live;
3. customise approaches for individuals within their community;
4. use collaborative partnerships to achieve results; and
5. support and strengthen local capacity of rural and remote communities.

The Remote Support and Coordination Branch will select suitable host organisations to perform a linguistic and cultural brokerage role as Remote Community Connectors (RCC) where appropriate. The RCC program is being expanded to include remote communities across the Northern Territory, Far North Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia.

The NDIA has also engaged 38 local Indigenous people to undertake Community Connector roles across the Northern Territory and Queensland. Community Connectors are local, community-based people who perform a cultural brokerage role to help to identify and engage with community, providers and NDIA staff. The NDIA is progressing work on the implementation of an expanded Community Connector service delivery model.

The NDIA is also undertaking a range of work through the Market Enablement Framework to support growth of an innovative disability services market as the Scheme rolls out. A project is being finalised to pilot interventions for ineffective and under-developed markets, including thin markets and regional and remote communities.



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Reference No: SQ19-000013

MAINTAINING CRITICAL SUPPORTS PROJECT

Hearing: N/A

Question:

[Ref: Provision of services under the NDIS for people with psychosocial disabilities related to a mental health condition – Report tabled 15 August 2017]

In relation to rec 18, where is the 'Maintaining Critical Supports' project at?

Answer:

The NDIA is working closely with State and Territory governments on a new approach to Maintaining Critical Supports (MCS) that is participant-centric. This includes ensuring participants are well supported to effectively use their funding in a flexible manner, specifically in response to any unforeseen needs and appropriate capability building supports.

NDIA is working on a number of actions to ensure Participants can access the supports they need, including:

- After-hours Crisis support arrangements – the NDIA has been piloting after-hours crisis response arrangements in three states to determine the best way to meet the needs of participants. Providers have been sourced to provide varying levels of support, depending on the level of escalation required.
- Critical Service Issues Response – the NDIA has worked with each State and Territory Government to establish clear mechanisms for escalation and resolution of individual and thematic issues that affect participants.

The approach to MCS has been agreed by the Disability Reform Council.



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Reference No: SQ19-000014

JSC 2019 PROGRESS REPORT: ILC

Hearing: N/A

Question:

[Ref: Provision of services under the NDIS for people with psychosocial disabilities related to a mental health condition – Report tabled 15 August 2017]

In relation to rec 20, the Australian Government said the ILC program outcomes will be assessed through the ILC evaluation framework. What are the key learnings to date in relation to the effectiveness of the ILC program in improving outcomes for people with a psychosocial disability?

Answer:

The Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) program to date has funded a total of eight projects that have a focus on supporting people with a psychosocial disability, with a combined value of \$7.06 million. The projects commenced on 1 July 2018 and will run for two years. As the projects have only been active for approximately seven months there is limited data to analyse the effectiveness of the ILC program in improving outcomes for people with psychosocial disability.

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) will continue to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of all ILC grants.

The NDIA released the ILC Investment Strategy for 2019-20 to 2021-22 in December 2018. Through the Investment Strategy, the NDIA is adopting a more strategic ILC approach, by specifying, funding and delivering four programs that will be progressively rolled out from July 2019. The four programs are consistent with the ILC Policy and outcomes framework. This new approach to ILC investment is designed to ensure:

- there are alternative pathways to an ordinary life for people with a disability, particularly building the capacity of non-participants to achieve their goals outside of specialist disability services;
- people with disability, their family and carers have greater access to information and supports;
- people with disability, their family and carers build their knowledge, skills and confidence to participate in social and economic life;
- a more aligned service delivery system of ILC delivery, grounded in organisations run by and for people with disability and/or their families and carers;
- strong collaboration across government and the sector that avoids duplication and maximises the NDIA's investment in ILC; and
- improved measurement of reach and impact of the ILC Investment Strategy.

The investment principles and enhanced measurement and evaluation capability will enable the impact and effectiveness of these programs to be measured over time, so learnings and adjustments can be made.



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Reference No: SQ19-000015

FORENSIC DISABILITY SERVICES

Hearing: N/A

Question:

[Ref: Provision of services under the NDIS for people with psychosocial disabilities related to a mental health condition – Report tabled 15 August 2017]

To date, how many locations have the complex support needs pathway in place? How many people have had access to the pathway? When will the complex supports needs pathway be rolled out nationally?

Answer:

The Complex Support Needs Pathway (CSNP) began operating on 5 November 2018 in the Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Moonee Valley, Wyndham, Brimbank and Melton Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Western Melbourne, Victoria.

The Victorian Government has referred an initial group of 276 participants who are considered as having complex support needs. These participants are from defined programs and have met access to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The Victorian Government has referred a further 30 people who are currently incarcerated and are in the process of being assessed to see if they meet the access criteria for the NDIS.

The CSNP also commenced in New South Wales (NSW) on 30 November 2018 in the Canterbury, Bankstown, Parramatta and Cumberland LGAs. The NSW team have 49 active referrals with more than 100 people identified as potential referrals. A number of priority referrals have been accepted from other locations, including Penrith, Liverpool, Lismore, Bathurst, Queanbeyan, Blacktown, Baulkham Hills and Chatswood.

The CSNP will commence rollout in the LGA of Canning in Western Australia next, then progressively rollout across the country during the remainder of 2019.



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Reference No: SQ19-000016

SECONDARY ACCESS POINT

Hearing: N/A

Question:

[Ref: Provision of services under the ECEI Approach – Report tabled 7 December 2017]

In relation to rec 1, the committee heard that prospective NDIS participants could potentially bypass the Early Childhood Partners by calling the NDIA directly to obtain an Access Request Form. Families could then pay for medical assessments to prove their child's eligibility and potentially gain access to the Scheme and a plan faster than those waiting for an appointment with a Partner. Can the Agency advise whether this secondary access point is still the case, and if so, will this arrangement continue into the future?

Answer:

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) has engaged Early Childhood Partners around Australia to deliver the Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) approach to children aged 0-6 years who have a developmental delay or disability. Early Childhood Partners are experienced in providing early childhood intervention. Families and carers can contact an Early Childhood Partner if concerns about their child's development have been identified. A child does not need to be a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participant to access these services.

As every child is different, the Early Childhood Partner will assess each child and tailor support to the child's individual needs and circumstances. The Early Childhood Partner will provide carers and families with information and connect them to services wherever possible. If a child requires more intensive early intervention, Early Childhood Partners will assist families through the process of applying for access to the NDIS along with supporting evidence of the child's delay or disability.

In some instances, families of children with more profound disabilities, along with the support of their health professional, may choose to contact the NDIA in the first instance to make an access request. In these cases, the National Contact Centre will immediately begin the access process, as well as provide families with details of the Early Childhood Partner/NDIS office in their area to ensure appropriate linkages to community and other government services are made and to ensure planning can commence as soon as possible.

Children with profound disabilities can also be supported through a warm handover from their health professional to the Early Childhood Partner who will assist them to access the right supports tailored to their individual support needs. The Early Childhood Partner and health services will also liaise around matters pertaining to discharge planning from acute medical settings if required for children with complex or profound disabilities, to ensure timely access to NDIS funded supports.



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Reference No: SQ19-000017

RECRUITMENT OF PARTNERS

Hearing: N/A

Question:

[Ref: Provision of services under the ECEI Approach – Report tabled 7 December 2017]

In relation to rec 2, can the NDIA provide the committee with information on its long-term vision for recruiting ECEI Partners in a consistent way? What is the length of time that Partners will be recruited for?

Answer:

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) engages 18 partners to provide Early Childhood Early Intervention services in 63 service areas across Australia. The NDIA is currently reviewing the forward strategy, including the length of time partners will be engaged for in the future. This review will include consultation with state governments, peak bodies, and existing partners. The long term partner strategy is due to be completed by the end of 2019



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Reference No: SQ19-000018

PEDI-CAT ASD TRIAL

Hearing: N/A

Question:

[Ref: Provision of services under the ECEI Approach – Report tabled 7 December 2017]

In relation to rec 7, the committee understands that Autism CRC is currently undertaking a trial of the PEDI-CAT ASD. Can the Agency explain what this trial intends to achieve, what work has been undertaken to date, and when is it expected to be completed?

Answer:

The PEDI-CAT (ASD) trial being undertaken by the Cooperative Research Centre for Living with Autism (Autism CRC) will determine if the PEDI-CAT (ASD) functional assessment tool has acceptable validity and reliability for measuring functional ability in individuals with autism or a related developmental disorder in Australia. This is a critical step before adopting it as an assessment tool for use in the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

The trial has received ethics approval and is now in its implementation phase. The researcher has commenced inviting potential participants to opt into the study and is undertaking the first functional assessments with them.

The research is expected to be completed by the end of June 2019.



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Reference No: SQ19-000019

ECEI NATIONAL TEAM

Hearing: N/A

Question:

[Ref: Provision of services under the ECEI Approach – Report tabled 7 December 2017]

In relation to rec 8, what are the functions of the ECEI national team? When did it become operational? What are the staffing arrangements, and the minimum qualifications and experience required of staff? How does the ECEI national team ensure ECEI plans are consistent and appropriate?

Answer:

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) National Early Childhood Service Branch is responsible for supporting the delivery and continuous improvement of the Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) approach through:

- strategic analysis of early childhood partner activity;
- training of early childhood partners and NDIA staff in the ECEI approach;
- clinical advice and expertise to early childhood partners and NDIA staff;
- resolution of systemic issues related to the delivery of the ECEI approach in line with agreed governance arrangements;
- identification of opportunities for improvement or risk mitigation; and
- ongoing development of policy, processes and resources to support the delivery of the ECEI approach.

The NDIA ECEI National team was established in 2015 to be in place for the rollout of the NDIS ECEI approach on 26 February 2016. In November 2018, the NDIA ECEI national team became the NDIA Early Childhood Services Branch. There are a range of positions within the Early Childhood Services (ECS) Branch that require differing qualifications and levels of experience.

The ECS Branch consists of a range of Practice Officers, Practice Advisors, Trainers, Communication and Strategy specialists, Project Managers, Business Support Officers and Analysts, at a range of levels. Experience and qualifications for positions within the ECS Branch are commensurate with the level of the position.

The National ECS Branch ensures ECEI plans are consistent and appropriate through a combination of initial and ongoing partner and NDIA staff training and provision of technical advice and ECEI resources.

The branch also undertakes a range of quality assurance functions to ensure best practice and national consistency. Audits of ECEI plans are also conducted by the Sustainability and Quality Branch, in consultation with the ECS Branch.

In early 2019, ECEI Practice Officers will be placed across the country to strengthen the delivery of ECEI practice through support to early childhood partners and NDIA staff, and in the implementation of the ECEI approach in general.



Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme
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Reference No: SQ19-000020

ILC PROJECTS SUPPORTING FAMILIES, CARERS AND SIBLINGS

Hearing: N/A

Question:

[Ref: Provision of services under the ECEI Approach – Report tabled 7 December 2017]

In relation to rec 15, the committee recommended that the NDIA consider allocating specific funding for the development and provision of tailored support programs for parents, carers and siblings of children with disability through the ILC. Can the Agency please provide information about funded ILC projects with a focus on providing support to families, carers and siblings?

Answer:

Through the Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) program, the National Disability Insurance Agency has funded nine projects with a combined value of \$2.64 million, which focus on providing supports to families, carers and siblings. A list of these grants is included at [Attachment A](#).

Attachments

Attachment A: List of ILC grants providing support to families, carers and siblings

Attachment A

ILC grants providing support to families, carers and siblings

Organisation	Project Name	Funding Amount	Project Description
Marymead	Kids Companion Program	\$157,000.00	Kids Companion Program - providing social support, mentoring, participant-driven peer-based activities and projects for young people with a disability (not on an NDIS plan), their siblings, and young people who care for someone with a disability (including psycho social disability).
ACT Playgroups Association Inc	Playing Together - a family and inclusion support model for mainstream playgroups	\$70,510.00	The Playing Together (PT) program will be delivered to 30-50 mainstream playgroups in the ACT region, reaching over 300 families. The program educates mainstream playgroups to become more welcoming and inclusive; better supporting adults and children with additional needs to connect with their community and access important parent peer-support networks. The project will employ and train parents with disabilities or a lived experience of disability to work as play helpers. This will improve standards of practice within playgrounds, and also provides income, training and valuable work experience that can contribute towards future career pathways in children's or disability services.
Playgroup SA Incorporated	Playing Together SA	\$144,424.00	An inclusive playgroup model for adults and children will be trialled across hundreds of playgrounds in South Australia that meet each week with attendance of several thousand families. This low cost, scalable model will upskill playgroup volunteers to create more inclusive playgroup environments. As a result children with additional needs will benefit from safer playgroups with more appropriate spaces, better targeted games and activities, and more opportunities to understand and engage with friends. Parents with disability and parents of children with disability will also be better supported by their peers.
Marymead	Autism Centre ACT	\$280,000.00	Funding will support Marymead's Autism Centre to continue providing strengths-based, person-centred services developed by experts for individuals, families and carers living with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in the ACT. The services include new diagnosis information, linkage and referral to other supports, information and education, and autism-specific support for NDIS planning. Marymead will also develop and deliver workshops, support groups, a monthly newsletter and an ASD library with a wide range of all-age resources.

Marymead	Kids' Companions Program	\$160,140.00	Kids' Companions provides social support, mentoring, participant-driven peer-based activities and projects for children and young people with a disability (who are not eligible for NDIS plans), their siblings, and young people who care for someone with a disability (including psycho social disability). The Kids Companion program holds two weekly sessions, monthly community days, and special interest activity days during the school holidays.
MacKillop Family Services Limited	The NDIS in the back o' Bourke	\$499,570.73	This project provides direct assistance to support people with disability, particularly people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background, in eight rural and remote Western NSW towns. Local needs, circumstances and conditions will be addressed for up to 100 people with disability. Specifically, the program will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish weekly parent support groups, community meetings and community hubs in each town to link families to mainstream services and disability supports to meet the needs of their child, whether eligible for NDIS plans or not. • Deliver tele-practice, to link people with disabilities to mainstream services
The Deaf Society NSW	Information for Families of Children with Hearing Loss	\$463,326.59	A co-designed website will be developed with live chat, telephone and face-to-face information and referral services. The project will also coordinate a parent peer mentoring program to provide psychosocial support to parents coming to terms with their child's diagnosis. 100 unique visitors are expected to the website each month and 40 families are expected to be matched with parent mentors each year. Deaf Awareness Training On Demand \$145,814.00 "This project will deliver an online version of deaf awareness training to support wider access by regionally-based people and those from community or volunteer organisations across NSW. At least 200 people are expected to access the online training during the building and testing phase. Up to 500 people a year are expected to access the online training once it is fully established.
Learning Links	Parents as Case Coordinators (PaCC)	\$344,164.00	Parents as Case Coordinators (PACC) is a national, online program for parents of children with a disability. It will provide functional resources to develop parents' case coordination skills in order to confidently navigate the NDIS and mainstream service network over their child's lifetime. A dedicated website with a video tutorial series, a toolbox of resources and a forum for parents and families to engage and share information will be developed, taking a person-centred and strengths-based approach.

Association for Children with a Disability (ACD)	Healthy Mothers Healthy Families Workshops	\$525,690.00	This two year project will adapt and expand the Healthy Mothers, Healthy Families (HMHF) workshops by training six facilitators to deliver 26 workshops across Victoria and Tasmania to mothers of children with disability. The improved online resource platform and face to face workshops aim to support participants to access activities, services and resources, encourage help-seeking behaviours, link to mainstream services and assist mothers to improve their families' health outcomes.
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Reference No: SQ19-000021

USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN RURAL AND REMOTE AREAS

Hearing: N/A

Hansard Page:

Question:

[Ref: Provision of services under the ECEI Approach – Report tabled 7 December 2017]

In relation to rec 16, the committee received calls for greater use of technology to deliver services to participants in rural and remote areas. The NDIA Rural and Remote Strategy 2016–19 specified that, within six months of the Scheme becoming available in each area, options for use of technology to assist in efficient delivery of supports to participants in their community had been investigated and were being trialled. Can the Agency provide updated information on implementation?

Answer:

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) acknowledges the difficulties of disability service provision in remote areas, and has established a Remote Support and Coordination Branch to support and improve the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) for participants who live remotely.

Service delivery in remote Australia needs to be tailored to take account of specific geographic, social, economic and cultural contexts that differentiate remote and very remote communities. The NDIA has trialled and implemented a number of approaches to use technology to assist in delivery of supports for remote participants, both in the NDIA planning process and in participant plans.

For example, the NDIA uses applications on mobile devices in remote areas specifically for translation (AUSLAN and Aboriginal Interpreting services) where interpreter resources may not be readily available. NDIA also uses video conferencing and teleconferencing where possible to provide the opportunity for additional internal participation in planning meetings. This is to supplement the face-to-face meeting with the participant and the local staff member

Where participants in remote areas have Assistive Technology funding specifically for wheelchairs, planners and Local Area Coordinators take into consideration environmental elements and build in provision for appropriate inclusions such as all-terrain tyres and heavy duty mechanical systems.



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Reference No: SQ19-00022

WEBSITE IMPROVEMENT

Hearing: N/A

Question:

[Ref: Provision of services under the ECEI Approach – Report tabled 7 December 2017]

In relation to rec 17, can the Agency advise what the ECEI tailored review intends to achieve, its expected completion, and implementation plan?

Answer:

The Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) Tailored Review response to Recommendation 17 (Website Improvement) focused on significantly improving communication provided to families/carers seeking to better understand the National Disability Insurance Scheme ECEI approach.

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) website development and communications teams consulted with the ECEI sector to develop simplified pathway models that use pictures and infographics to show various pathways into the Scheme. Supporting information was significantly rewritten to be more consistent and more clearly explain the ECEI approach for families and carers. The aim is to improve public understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the NDIS, early childhood partners, and families and carers in addressing the needs of their child.

This reworking of website content was completed in time for the launch of the new NDIS website in late January 2019 and has been complemented by the production of brochures, flyers, and information booklets the ECEI Partners give to families and carers to support their conversations with each other, the NDIA, and Partners in the Community.

The Early Childhood Services Branch of the NDIA continues to monitor the effectiveness of the information provided through the NDIS website and the supplementary information developed for the benefit of ECEI Partners and families. The NDIA will continue to develop and revise the ECEI information on its website through ongoing stakeholder and ECEI Partner feedback. Updates will continue to be made as and when appropriate.



Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme
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General issues around the implementation and performance of the NDIS

Reference No: SQ19-000023

ILC FUNDING FOR VULNERABLE FAMILIES

Hearing: N/A

Question:

[Ref: Provision of services under the ECEI Approach – Report tabled 7 December 2017]

In relation to rec 18, the committee recommended that the NDIA allocate specific funding for information and support for vulnerable families to connect with ECEI Partners through the ILC. The Agency undertook to consider the recommendation as part of its ongoing refinement of the priority areas for ILC investment. Can the Agency please list the number of ILC grants awarded to assist with connecting vulnerable families to ECEI Partners?

Answer:

Please refer to Question on Notice SQ19-000020 regarding Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) funding for Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI). While these general ECEI projects will have a wide benefit, to date the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) has not awarded an ILC grant specifically to assist with connecting vulnerable families to ECEI partners.

Following the release of the ILC investment strategy in December 2018, the NDIA will be commissioning four new programs under ILC. Two of the programs may provide support to link families with ECEI:

- The individual capacity building program is a key element of the investment strategy, which will fund Disabled People's Organisations and Family Organisations (DPO/FO). These organisations will play a role in connecting people with disability, their families and carers to both Local Area Coordination and ECEI partners.
- The national information program will be an avenue for providing quality information to priority cohorts, such as information about autism and the services and supports available to vulnerable families within their community.

In providing any support for connecting vulnerable families, it is critical to ensure that mainstream services work together. The early childhood education and care sector, the health system and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (ECEI providers) are responsible for working together at a local level to plan and coordinate streamlined support for babies and children through integrated planning and timely referrals and transitions between systems. This includes the referral of vulnerable families to ECEI partners.



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Reference No: SQ19-00024

TAILORED INFORMATION FOR ABORIGINAL, TORRES STRAIT, AND CALD COMMUNITIES

Hearing: N/A

Question:

[Ref: Provision of services under the ECEI Approach – Report tabled 7 December 2017]

In relation to rec 19, the committee recommended that the NDIA collaborate with people with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and CALD communities, to co-design and develop accessible information about the Scheme, the ECEI Approach, and how to use funds to access services. The Agency undertook some consultation in 2017 and 2018; however, there is no advice on how or when this work will be used to develop information for these cohorts. Can the Agency please update the committee on where this work is up to?

Answer:

The National Disability Insurance Agency's (NDIA) goal is to have meaningful communication and engagement with participants and their carers. The NDIA has collaborated with people who have a disability who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and culturally and linguistically diverse communities to co-design and develop accessible information about many aspects of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

For people with disability from a variety of backgrounds, the NDIA is working to develop accessible communications across a variety of platforms. These include:

- Updating the new NDIS website to provide links to translated information about the NDIS, making it easier for people from CALD backgrounds to access information. All language resources will be located on a specific language page.
- Information on a range of NDIS topics such as psychosocial disabilities, self-management of NDIS plans and early childhood intervention are currently being translated for the new NDIS website, including into 12 languages other than English.
- In 2017, the NDIA made arrangements with Translation and Interpreting Services National (TIS) to provide participants with access to NDIA-funded interpreters when developing and implementing their NDIS plan. The NDIA has partnered with TIS National so that participants from CALD backgrounds are not charged for language interpreting services when they are using the funded reasonable and necessary supports in their NDIS plan.

- The NDIA is initiating support from key peak bodies in the CALD sector to support the design and development of service enhancements for CALD participants. This support will include design and deployment strategies for tailored communication products in languages other than English.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with a disability, the NDIA worked with organisations to develop targeted communications products, which were tested with stakeholders in October 2018. NDIA is working with local community groups to tailor these communication products to local language groups.

Further, the NDIA has contracted a key peak organisation in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disability sector to provide training and licensed use of a story telling and picture based resource known as Our Way. This resource provides a tool to communicate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants to explain the concept of disability, the role of the NDIS and provides a framework to discuss what may be included within an NDIS plan. This resource is set to be trialled in Aurukun and Hope Vale.

To further support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and CALD people with a disability to access information about the NDIS, the NDIA has Easy English versions of the participant planning booklets. These have been printed and published online, braille versions are available on request and versions translated into 12 languages other than English will be available nationally from early 2019.



Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme
Answer to Question on Notice

General issues around the implementation and performance of the NDIS

Reference No: SQ19-000025

CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE SERVICES

Hearing: N/A

Question:

[Ref: Provision of services under the ECEI Approach – Report tabled 7 December 2017]

In relation to rec 20, what work has been undertaken through the ECEI tailored review to investigate how culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can be delivered under the ECEI Approach?

Answer:

The development of a specific strategy to provide culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples under the Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) approach is a feature of ECEI pathway enhancement work for the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA).

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ECEI strategy is focused on a range of challenges such as:

- Centrality of Country, Culture and Community – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with disability and their representatives have emphasised that country, culture and community should be central to any policy that affects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with disability.
- There is a need for cultural responsiveness including:
 - established tiers of engagement with community, elders, land councils; and
 - staff cultural skill, including language and identification with community.
- Inclusion in mainstream services is as important as specialist disability services and early childhood intervention services – the NDIS will provide an opportunity for specialist providers to cater to the individual specialist support needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with disability and children with developmental delay.

This work aims to improve the access of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with disability to disability service providers and children with developmental delay to early childhood intervention services. It will also promote service provision that is culturally appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within both the disability and early childhood intervention sector and other service systems.



Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme
Answer to Question on Notice

General issues around the implementation and performance of the NDIS

Reference No: SQ19-000027

ASSERTIVE OUTREACH

Hearing: N/A

Question:

[Ref: Transitional arrangements for the NDIS – Report tabled 15 February 2018]

In relation to rec 20, the Australian Government stated that the NDIA was developing a Hard to Reach Strategy due for finalisation and publication in 2018. The committee has been unable to locate a copy of the Strategy. Can you please provide a copy of the Strategy so the committee can be updated on the work to ensure that assertive outreach services will be delivered beyond transition to ensure people with disability who are hard to reach can effectively engage with the NDIS and / or other support programs.

Answer:

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) will provide a copy of the Hard to Reach Strategy once finalised in mid-2019. The NDIA would note the complex support needs pathway, which began rollout in 2018, has been developed to provide specialised support for people with disability who experience personal and situational factors that are beyond the scope of standard disability support models.



Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme
Answer to Question on Notice

General issues around the implementation and performance of the NDIS

Reference No: SQ19-000028

DRAFT PLANS

Hearing: N/A

Question:

The committee understands that participants are now able to view draft versions of their plans as they are being created during planning meetings. However, participants are not provided with a copy of their draft plan to take home for consideration and review before it is sent to the Agency for approval. Can the NDIA please clarify that this is still the current arrangement? What mechanisms has the Agency considered introducing or introduced already to mitigate high rates of unscheduled plan reviews?

Answer:

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) discusses a working version of a participant's plan with them in detail before it is finalised by the NDIA.

To reduce the number of unscheduled reviews, the NDIA is introducing the following service improvements:

- A dedicated branch has been established to manage existing and emerging unscheduled plan review requests.
- The new National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participant pathway, featuring enhanced planning conversations delivered face-to-face; a single point of contact; plan alignment meetings; and additional training for service delivery staff.
- Tailored service approaches to support consistent access and participant experience with the NDIS, including:
 - enhancements to the Early Childhood Early Intervention pathway;
 - a new complex support needs pathway;
 - psychosocial and hearing service streams; and
 - service enhancements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people from remote and very remote communities, and people who identify as LGBTIQ+.
- NDIA Business System (CRM) changes to streamline plan review participant experiences.
- A re-design of Assistive Technology and home modification processes to reduce wait times.



Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme
Response to Request for Information / Action

General issues around the implementation and performance of the NDIS

Reference No: SQ19-000029

ACTION ITEM FROM PRIVATE BRIEFING: USE OF LAWYERS TO MANAGE AAT OUTCOMES

Hearing: 28 November 2018

Requested action:

At the Committee's private briefing with the Minister for Families and Social Services on 28 November 2018, the NDIA undertook to brief the Committee on its approach to using lawyers to manage AAT outcomes, including NDIA legal costs associated with the AAT process and a breakdown of outcomes.

NDIA response:

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) and the Australian Government support an individual's right to seek a review and test the validity of a decision made by the NDIA.

Participants are able to seek an internal review regarding access and planning decisions in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). If participants remain dissatisfied, they are able to seek a review through the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) processes. The Government supports participants' access to the AAT via legal assistance through the NDIS Appeals Program.

It is entirely appropriate the NDIA deals with matters in the AAT on a case-by-case basis, with due consideration of the costs and benefits of proceeding to hearing, as per any other normal course of legal practice.

In the 2017-18 financial year, the NDIA expended \$2.317 million in internal legal services, inclusive of operational costs. The NDIA additionally expended \$3.363 million externally, including barristers, expert reports, summons costs, AAT staff travel, briefings, T-Docs, transcripts and other legal disbursements that relate to the AAT in the 2017-18 financial year. These figures were reported to the Attorney-General Department.

Since 1 July 2017, 41 cases have gone to substantive hearing and had a decision. Of these:

- 54 per cent have affirmed the NDIA's decision;
- 27 per cent have varied the NDIA's decision; and
- 19 per cent have set aside the NDIA's decision.



Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme
Response to Request for Information / Action

General issues around the implementation and performance of the NDIS

Reference No: SQ19-000030

ACTION ITEM FROM PRIVATE BRIEFING: PARTICIPANT SATISFACTION DATA BREAKDOWN

Hearing: 28 November 2018

Requested action:

At the Committee's private briefing with the Minister for Families and Social Services on 28 November 2018, the NDIA undertook to provide a breakdown of participant satisfaction data between new NDIS participants and those who have transitioned from a previous state or territory disability system.

NDIA response:

The National Disability Insurance Agency currently reports publicly on participant satisfaction with the planning process in the quarterly reports to the Council of Australian Governments Disability Reform Council (COAG DRC). National results and results by state/territory are contained in these reports. However, since the survey is anonymous, it is not possible to split the results by any characteristics of the participant or their plan (apart from state/territory, since the interviews are conducted separately by state/territory). Hence, it is not possible to provide a breakdown of the current survey results separately for new participants and those who have transitioned from a previous state or territory disability system.

A new participant satisfaction survey has been developed to measure satisfaction across all points of the participant pathway (access, pre-planning, planning and plan review). Due to small numbers, results from the new survey have not yet been publicly reported. At a national level, results from the new survey currently show relatively small differences between new participants and those who have transitioned from a previous state or territory disability system, and no consistent trends. Currently there are insufficient numbers to provide a meaningful comparison by state/territory. Results will continue to be monitored as the number of new surveys collected grows.