



**Senate Select Committee on COVID-19
Answer to Question on Notice**

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Reference No: SQ20-000184

COVID-19 INFECTIONS - NDIA STAFF AND PARTICIPANTS

Hearing: 30 April 2020

Hansard Page:

Written

Question:

1. Could up-to-date data on COVID-19 infection among NDIS participants and staff be provided per week since January 2020?

Answer:

From January 2020 to 12 May 2020, the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) has had two confirmed positive results of COVID-19 infection amongst staff.

For NDIS participants and provider staff, please refer to NDIS Commission QON SQ20-000045.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Hearing: 30 April 2020

Hansard Page: Written

Question:

4. How many disability service providers and self-managed participants have received PPE from the Department of Health's National Stockpile?

a. How many requests for PPE have been submitted to the Stockpile.Ops@health.gov.au and NDISCOVIDPPE@health.gov.au by NDIS providers and participants; and how many of these requests have been granted?

b. What is the average response time for NDIS provider inquiries to the Stockpile.Ops@health.gov.au and NDISCOVIDPPE@health.gov.au email addresses, and overall time taken to distribute PPE to disability service providers, including those in rural and remote areas?

Answer:

4.
As at 10 May 2020, 16,500 items of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) have been delivered to 69 National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) providers across the country from the Commonwealth Department of Health's National Stockpile.

4a.
The Department of Health (Health) is responsible for Stockpile.Ops@health.gov.au and NDISCOVIDPPE@health.gov.au.

4b.
Once a request for PPE from NDIS providers and participants is received by Health, they seek to make contact with the applicants and make a determination regarding the PPE request within 24 hours. The NDIA aims to have the approved PPE delivered to the nominated provider or participant within 24 hours of Health's decision, including to rural and remote areas.

Access to PPE is based on an established need in line with clinical evidence, for example, to assist managing an outbreak of COVID-19 at a facility. This process is managed by Health.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Hearing: 30 April 2020

Hansard Page:

Written

Question:

5. How many participants and providers have been reimbursed by the NDIA for the cost of PPE, and what is the total value of these payments?

Answer:

The National Disability Insurance Agency's (NDIA) self-managed participants have the flexibility in their plan to purchase Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) such as gloves, masks and disinfectant.

The NDIA currently is unable to track the purchase of PPE from the participant's plan.

Registered providers cannot charge more than the NDIS Price Guide and Support Catalogue or claim separately from participant plans for PPE provided to support workers. However the NDIA recognises that PPE may sometimes need to be provided to support workers, which increases the costs of service delivery. To assist providers at this time, the NDIA added a 10 per cent loading to the price limits for Core supports and services like assistance with daily living, and social and community participation, plus Capacity Building supports for improved daily living.

The NDIA has no record of Providers seeking reimbursement for the cost of PPE.

Participants and Providers are also able to send requests to the National Stockpile.

SUPPORTED INDEPENDENT LIVING (SIL)

Hearing: 11 May 2020

Hansard Page:

Written

Question:

6. Could a breakdown of the calculation used to come to the following new supports for Supported Independent Living (SIL) be provided:

- a. Cleaning services: \$300 to cover the cost of a one-off professional deep cleaning of a residence per participant newly diagnosed with coronavirus (COVID-19), with one claim allowable per participant diagnosed with coronavirus (COVID-19).
- b. Higher intensity support: \$1,200 maximum daily rate to cover the cost of higher intensity support including staffing increase, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), professional laundering, and any ancillary costs directly related to the participant's diagnosis. This item may be claimed throughout a participant's period of infection (based on number of days from diagnosis to negative test result), whether they are located in their normal accommodation, in hospital, or isolated in alternative accommodation.

Answer:

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) applied a number of assumptions to calculate the cost of each support item and these assumptions are listed in Table 1.

The rates of each support item were sourced from the 2019-20 Support Catalogue (adjusted for COVID-19 price loading) and provider estimates. The rates used to calculate the costs of the new support items are listed in Table 2.

- a. The cost of a one-off professional deep clean was calculated at 4 hours at \$55.27 per hour (totalling \$221.06). The amount was rounded up to \$300.
- b. The daily cost to provide higher intensity support related to the participant's diagnosis comprises:
 - daily clean - 4 hours at \$55.27 per hour (totalling \$221.06), and
 - the support ratio increase \$924.64.

This totals \$1,145.79, which was rounded up to \$1,200.

Any short-term accommodation that is required while a participant is infected will be paid for outside of these rates.

The assumptions used to build the calculation were tested with a provider representative organisation prior to being finalised.

Table 1: Assumptions determined by the NDIA

Support Item	
Deep industrial clean of accommodation	4 hours x once 4 hours x daily
External laundering of linen and clothing (70 degrees)	2 hours x daily
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for all residents and workers	Yes (generally disposable in line with infection control requirements)
Short Term Accommodation	N/A
Change in Support ratio	Increase from less intensive to 1:2 support ratio

Table 2: Support item rates

Support Item	Costing Assumption	Daily Rate (adjusted for % SIL participants in remote areas)
Deep industrial clean of accommodation	Hourly rate for support item "Assistance With Personal Domestic Activities" (01_004_0107_1_1)	\$55.27 per hour
External laundering of linen and clothing (70 degrees)	Hourly rate for support item "Assistance With Personal Domestic Activities" (01_004_0107_1_1)	\$55.27 per hour
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for all residents and workers	Quotes received on PPE costs included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Masks/sanitiser/hand soap for \$15.50 per day. Gowns / eye protection with 2 washable gowns at \$45 each for 50% of staff and goggles or face shields at \$30 each for 50% of staff 	\$75.50
Change in Support ratio	Difference in daily rate if support ratio increases from 1:2 (\$1,120.73) to 1:1 (\$2,045.37) – noting this price difference is greater than increases in other ratios (e.g. from 1:2 to 1:3)	\$924.64

COVID-19 PRICE INCREASE

Hearing: 30 April 2020

Hansard Page:

Written

Question:

7. Has there been a decline in overall use of the supports subject to the 10% price increase: Assistance with Daily Life (but not including Supported Independent Living), Assistance with Social and Community Participation, Improved Health and Wellbeing (but not including personal training), Improved Daily Living Skills?

Answer:

The table below shows average monthly payments from February 2020 to April 2020 for the support categories receiving the COVID-19 10 per cent price increase. Payments have been adjusted for number of working days per month, and exclude payments for in-kind supports and YPIRAC.

Support Category	Average monthly payment per participant			Average payment Feb to Mar	% change in April 2020 payments
	Feb-20	Mar-20	Apr-20		
Assistance with Daily Life (non-SIL)	\$955.1	\$965.5	\$1,053.7	\$960.3	9.7%
Assistance with Social and Community Participation	\$810.6	\$792.8	\$686.6	\$801.7	-14.4%
Improved Daily Living Skills	\$459.8	\$492.7	\$490.9	\$476.2	3.1%
Improved Health and Wellbeing	\$8.2	\$8.1	\$6.9	\$8.1	-14.8%

The COVID-19 10 per cent price increase applies to supports provided by registered providers from 25 March 2020 onwards. In April 2020, it was estimated 22 per cent of total payments for eligible supports were made at the higher price limit. As a result, the expected increase in total payments during April 2020 for the 10 per cent price loading would be 2.2 per cent, assuming consistent use of supports.

The actual percentage change in payments in April 2020 suggests that:

- Use of assistance with Daily Life (non-SIL) supports have increased by approximately seven per cent.
- Use of Assistance with Social and Community Participation and Improved Health and Wellbeing supports have declined by approximately 17 per cent.
- Use of Improved Daily Living Skills has remained broadly the same.

OUTREACH CALLS TO PARTICIPANTS

Hearing: 30 April 2020

Hansard Page:

Written

Question:

8. How many participants have received an outreach call (not a participant requested or 'light touch' review) from the NDIA per month since January 2020?
- a. How does this compare to data for the same period from 2019?
 - b. How many outreach calls result in a plan review for the participant?
 - c. Could any scripts for NDIA staff to use on these calls be tabled?

Answer:

As at 11 May 2020, there were 31,190 attempts to make a proactive, outbound phone calls to vulnerable participants. Of these, 27,742 calls have been completed..

- a. The calls to vulnerable participants are a specific COVID-19 initiative so no comparable data exists.
- b. As at 11 May 2020, approximately 514 Participants have had a Light Touch Plan Review occur within 30 days of the creation of the outbound call record. Changes to the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) business system were required to capture this data. Further upgrades are continuing to ensure all reviews resulting from outbound calls are captured.
- c. The NDIA script for outbound Vulnerable Participant calls provides guidance to staff across three key areas so they can tailor the conversation to the individual participant needs:
 - a. Pre-call requirements – desk top review to understand participant preferences and circumstances including communication needs and nominee/guardian status, review existing plan and usage patterns and to identify any current activities being undertaken with the participant (i.e. section 48 request).
 - b. Participant Call requirements – provides guidance to alleviate any concerns in relation to COVID-19, provide information on Home Delivery Code, information on State or Territory based COVID-19 referral points across mainstream and community and where required undertake Light Touch Plan Review.
 - c. Post Call – complete any incomplete tasks as a result of the call and guidance on interaction recording.

Scripts are updated on a regular basis as we move through the pandemic.

**Senate Select Committee on COVID-19
Answer to Question on Notice**

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Reference No: SQ20-000189

PLAN REVIEWS

Hearing: 30 April 2020

Hansard Page:

Written

Question:

9. In relation to Tabled document 5. Participant Plan Reviews, could a breakdown by provided for the 'in progress' group:

- a. Average time since initial request made for the review;
- b. Maximum time since initial request made for the review;
- c. Minimum time since initial request made for the review.

Answer:

Table 1 below is an update to the document tabled on 30 April 2020. Table 1 includes Participant Requested Review (PRR) data for an additional week (week ending 2 May 2020) and the number of days that 25 per cent, 50 per cent and 75 per cent of PRRs had been in progress.

For the week ending 2 May 2020, 100 per cent of the PRRs completed had been in progress for 14 days or less which is consistent with the prior four weeks. For the PRRs that were still in progress, 75 per cent of them had been in progress for five days or less.

On average, 99 or 100 per cent of all PRRs have been completed within 14 days in the four weeks ending 2 May 2020. The National Disability Insurance Agency expects a similar timeframe for PRRs currently in progress.

Table 1

Week Ending	Completed	New	In Progress	Completed within 14 days	% Completed within 14 days	25% of PRRs in progress (no. of days)	50% of PRRs in progress (no. of days)	75% of PRRs in progress (no. of days)
23/02/2020	1183	1288	1405	1119	95%	3	5	9
1/03/2020	1327	1256	1334	1275	96%	3	4	9
8/03/2020	1387	1234	1181	1344	97%	3	4	10
15/03/2020	1161	1075	1095	1086	94%	3	4	10
22/03/2020	1238	1048	905	1102	89%	3	4	9
29/03/2020	1168	1030	767	1061	91%	3	4	6
4/04/2020	1186	1215	796	1136	96%	1	2	3
11/04/2020	1080	1000	716	1076	100%	2	3	4
18/04/2020	1055	1083	744	1048	99%	1	2	3
25/04/2020	1206	1398	936	1195	99%	2	3	3
2/05/2020	999	1371	1308	997	100%	2	3	5

PLAN REVIEWS

Hearing: 30 April 2020

Hansard Page:

Written

Question:

10. Could the data in 9 be provided for:
- Unscheduled plan reviews;
 - Scheduled Plan reviews; and
 - S100 internal reviews.

Answer:

- "Unscheduled plan reviews" was a term that was used to describe plan reviews that occurred more than 100 days before the plan review date. This business definition was used as data on Participant Plan Reviews (PRRs – section 48 of the NDIS Act), and Reviews of Reviewable Decisions (RoRDs – section 100 of the NDIS Act), was not available. Now that data on PRRs and RORDs is available, reporting on the business definition of unscheduled reviews has ceased. Data on PRRs was provided in SQ20-000189 and the data for RoRDs is provided below.
- For the week ending 8 May 2020, 243,943 scheduled plan reviews had been completed for the financial year to date with 71 per cent of these plan reviews completed before the due date.
- The table below has the RoRD data from the week ending 23 February 2020, along with the number of days RoRDs have been in progress (at the 25th percentile, 50th percentile, and the 75th percentile).

For the week ending 17 May 2020, 92 per cent of RoRDs completed had been in progress for 90 days or less which is an improvement on the result for the week ending 23 February 2020 when 49 per cent of RoRDs completed had been in progress for 90 days or less.

For the RoRDs that are in progress, 75 per cent of them had been in progress for 38 days or less for the week ending 17 May 2020. This is a significant improvement compared to the week ending 23 February 2020 when the equivalent result was 75 per cent in progress for 125 days or less.

Week Ending	New	Completed	In Progress <45days	In Progress 46-90 days	In Progress >90 days	In Progress Total	Completed within 90 days	Completed (%) within 90 days	25% of RoRDs in Progress (days)	50% of RoRDs in Progress (Days)	75% of RoRDs in Progress (days)
23 Feb 20	617	977	3,108	2,045	3,547	8,700	481	49%	31	74	125
1 Mar 20	635	946	3,114	1,931	3,344	8,389	437	46%	28	73	123
8 Mar 20	642	943	3,097	1,934	3,057	8,088	378	40%	27	62	117
15 Mar 20	525	858	3,066	1,896	2,793	7,755	315	37%	27	60	115
22 Mar 20	559	989	2,942	1,944	2,439	7,325	279	28%	26	58	106
29 Mar 20	504	1,341	2,792	2,113	1,583	6,488	348	26%	25	53	87
5 Apr 20	483	1,224	2,607	2,102	1,038	5,747	576	47%	24	51	80
12 Apr 20	388	1,013	2,317	1,967	838	5,122	590	58%	26	52	81
19 Apr 20	510	1,083	2,153	1,791	605	4,549	609	56%	25	47	75
26 Apr 20	669	1,335	2,186	1,285	412	3,883	981	73%	18	40	62
3 May 20	591	1,295	2,076	861	242	3,179	1,063	82%	12	32	52
10 May 20	520	1,232	1,896	435	136	2,467	1,072	87%	11	23	44
17 May 20	149	1,024	1,282	234	76	1,592	947	92%	13	24	38

Reference No: SQ20-000191

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PARTICIPANTS

Hearing: 30 April 2020

Hansard Page:

Written

Question:

11. The number of Indigenous participants in NSW was 7,654 in the last quarterly report. How many of these participants are located in the Hunter New England region?

Answer:

As at 31 March 2020, there were 8,285 participants who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in NSW, of whom 2,340 resided in the Hunter New England service regions.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EMPLOYMENT POLICY

Hearing: 30 April 2020

Hansard Page:

Written

Question:

12. What is the NDIA's Indigenous employment policy? Does it apply to Local Area Coordinators (LAC)?

Answer:

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) is striving to achieve a diverse workforce that is reflective of the communities we serve, which includes a focus on the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The NDIA has an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy 2018–20 which is a commitment to increasing representation and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the workforce.

Work will commence towards the end of 2020 to develop a second Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy, to continue to focus the NDIA's commitment to attracting, supporting and retaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in its workforce.

To develop the Employment Strategy, the NDIA is consulting widely with employees and key stakeholders, including Local Area Coordinators, who are part of our partner organisations. The NDIA's Employment Strategy does not apply to Local Area Coordinators.

The NDIA has arrangements with Partners in the Community, including Local Area Coordinators, who are required to meet targets for the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (three per cent). As at 31 March 2020, Partners in the Community are exceeding the target for Indigenous employment, with 3.4 per cent of staff members who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

The NDIA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy can be found at:
<https://www.ndis.gov.au/about-us/careers-ndia/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-candidates#aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-employment-strategy-2018-2020>

NSW LAC POSITIONS

Hearing: 30 April 2020

Hansard Page: Written

Question:

13. In relation to the Minister's media release on 23 April 2020 '\$400 million for frontline NDIS services in NSW':

- a. How many total LAC positions are in place in NSW under current contractual arrangements with LAC providers?
 - i. How many of these positions are held by First Nations-identifying staff?
- b. What is the average participant to LAC ratio under these arrangements?
- c. How many LAC positions will exist in NSW following 1 July?
 - i. How many of these positions are guaranteed to be held by First Nations identifying staff?
- d. What will be the average participant to LAC ratio under these arrangements?

Answer:

13a, 13ai and 13b

The answer to these questions is provided in SQ20-000194.

13c

Successful applicants for the NSW Local Area Coordination (LAC) Grant Round are currently recruiting staff members for the delivery of LAC services in NSW.

It is anticipated that LAC FTE positions in NSW will be in line with the current number of positions.

13ci

Partners in the Community are required to meet a three per cent target for employment of people who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

13d

The participant to LAC ratios under the Partners in the Community program vary depending on a number of factors, including the service model deployed by the Partner, service area demographics and resourcing. The National Disability Insurance Agency anticipates the new ratio will remain consistent with the current ratio.

NATIONAL LOCAL AREA COORDINATION POSITIONS

Hearing: 30 April 2020

Hansard Page:

Written

Question:

14. Could the answers in 13.a, 13.a.i and 13.b be provided nationally, and for all other states and territories?

Answer:

14a.

As at 31 March 2020 under current arrangements with Partners in the Community **3,113 full time equivalent** (FTE), including **703** FTE support staff, are delivering Local Area Coordination (LAC) services nationally.

Data by state is provided in the below table. Note totals may differ due to rounding of FTE.

State	Total FTE	Support Staff (included in total FTE)
ACT	41	9
NSW	976	202
NT	25	8
QLD	613	170
SA	187	46
TAS	70	13
VIC	849	163
WA	351	91
Total	3113	703

14ai.

As at 31 March 2020 under current contractual arrangements with Partners in the Community **106** FTE are delivering LAC services nationally. This is 3.4 per cent of the total Partner LAC workforce.

State	Total Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander FTE
ACT	1

State	Total Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander FTE
NSW	58
NT	2
QLD	19
SA	5
TAS	6
VIC	10
WA	5
Total	106

14b.

Participant to LAC FTE ratios under the Partners in the Community program vary depending on a number of factors specific to each service area. Key considerations include:

- The scope of activities undertaken vary in each area between the Partner and the NDIA depending on the mix of work (e.g. in many cases work allocation is managed between both when undertaking plan builds for participants);
- Demographics and geographic spread of people with a disability across regions;
- Diversity and background of people with a disability and Participants;
- Operating models deployed by Partners; and
- Level of support and planning coordination required due to market factors.

In areas where the ratios are high, the agency provides support to Partners through either directly undertaking planning activities (for example, completing plan builds) and/or calling on other resources from across the Partner network.

The following represents the approximate ratios of Participants to Partner resources as at 31 March 2020 for each state and territory:

State	Approximate Participants per LAC (Note: Data may include Participants in areas managed by the NDIA)
National Average	72
NSW	73
ACT	116
NT	35
QLD	63
SA	113
TAS	63
VIC	79
WA	48

The NDIA regularly remodels work volumes and varies agreements accordingly in order to match funding and resources across the Partner network.