

Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on NDIS: NDIS ICT Systems

Endeavour Foundation

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Introduction

Endeavour Foundation has raised a number of issues directly with the NDIA regarding portal, billing and IT systems issues.

In some instances, these issues curtail the choice and control that individuals have over the use of their support funds, in direct contravention of the stated aims of the NDIS.

In addition, the NDIS requires service providers to invoice the NDIA for each instance of support provided, in order to maintain an individualised funding approach. While Endeavour Foundation strongly supports individualised and flexible funding, service providers must navigate a complex, inefficient and sometimes unpredictable system in order to obtain payment.

Dealing with these systems issues creates significant additional cost for service providers. As a for purpose organisation Endeavour Foundation's ultimate aim is to dedicate available resources to continuous improvement and innovation in frontline support options, rather than employing additional back-office staff to complete NDIA billing and remittances.

We are also mindful that people with disability and carers who are self-managing their support packages, also lead busy lives including full time work, time-consuming caring or self-caring duties, and procuring the supports of their choice. Feedback from people in this situation confirms that the complexity of NDIA systems is creating a significant time impost, increased stress and a sense of loss of control over their lives.

Furthermore, the NDIS requires a flourishing and competitive market of service providers, to ensure people have access to a range of support choices. Endeavour Foundation believes it is important for the NDIA to reduce complexity in IT systems and billing procedures wherever possible, in order to reduce the financial pressure and on-costs facing smaller providers; thereby increasing their chances of continued viability during and after the transition to full implementation. Given the recent closure of a number of providers due to financial pressures, this is of particular concern.

In this submission we have outlined a number of issues and suggested solutions which would help to reduce the complexity and cost that people with disability and service providers face in dealing with the NDIA.

The NDIS Website: Clarity, Billing and Pricing

Currently, the NDIA website is not user-friendly. Billing and pricing information provided on the NDIS website is vague, ambiguous, and open to interpretation. This leaves room for many problems and misconceptions due to a lack of clarity, consistency and transparency around Agency decision-making.

Suggested Solution:

Upgrade and redesign the website with the user in mind. Provide quality, accurate information about the rules that underpin Agency decision-making, pricing and billing. A revised website should be extensively user tested with participants, carers and service providers to identify and resolve ongoing issues.

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Reconciliations / Remittance Advice

Reconciliation processes are unpredictable and often require a high degree of manual intervention.

Users are required to deal with inconsistent remittance formats, lack of CSV/HTML format remittance, a requirement to manually download remittance advice (compounded by slow performance and connectivity issues with the portal), and the inability to automatically email remittance advice.

There are also many other discrepancies and inconsistencies which require manual intervention. These include changes being made to the details of claims submitted for manual payment, and inconsistent bank references and narrative fields in payments.

Suggested Solutions

- Establish a consistent format for all Remittance Advices.
- Provide HTML and CSV format Remittance Advice downloads.
- Enable Remittance Advices to be automatically emailed or allow users to set up rules in the Portal InBox to do so.
- Upgrade the portal speed and connectivity.
- Ensure details reported by the NDIA for manual payments are accurate, enabling users to have confidence that the claims have been correctly paid, and organisational data is correct.

Working together to create better systems

Endeavour Foundation welcomes recent efforts by the NDIA to better understand the difficulties outlined above.

We encourage the NDIA to develop an ongoing framework for engagement with all sector stakeholders regarding these matters, and the implementation of the scheme in general. This engagement should include participants, carers, service providers, peak bodies and independent systems advocates.

When work is carried out to improve the portal and billing/remittance processes, we encourage the NDIA to refer these to a range of stakeholders for testing during the development phase, to help identify and solve end-user problems prior to implementation.

Please refer questions about this submission to

Kirrily Boulton
Head of Corporate Affairs
Endeavour Foundation