

## Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee Public Hearing on the NDIS roll out in Western Sydney

### ISSUES:

The scale and complexity of implementation is placing great pressure on stakeholders, including service providers from inadequate pricing to systems that are not holding up in the rapid pace of implementation

### Effect on the organisation

1. Since its nation-wide launch in July 2016, we have been swamped with demand with NDIS participant requests increasing significantly with many requests for individual, 1:1 support.
2. A significant amount of non-billable time is spent supporting carers and participants through the transition:
  - a. The amount of time spent supporting carers in understanding the NDIS;
  - b. The amount of time providing carers with support letters when making an appeal against their plan;
  - c. Many of our participants and carers are NESB and have required additional support to understand the changes. Every time there is communication from NDIS we get a call.
  - d.
3. Disability service organisations need to be involved in the planning process as they know the participants and their needs.
4. Carers and participants often request continuity of service provision – in the form of the same support worker or group of workers. To organise this and continue to provide for this important request requires time by the Service Provider.
5. Our organisation was last given a list of participants who transitioned to NDIS in March. The list is provided as a code. We had 176 participants who we had to decode and then search for Participant Number and find out if they had a plan. **We need to be informed when a participant has an approved NDIS plan.**
6. Due to the NDIS pricing guide we can no longer use agency staff – hence the need to employ additional staff to meet the increased demand.
7. Staffing: the overheads required to hire staff, do background checks, maintain records on staff regarding their credentials, training, rostering, cancellation costs, etc. appear to be much higher in comparison to the amount we are able to “charge”.
8. We require a full time HR person to manage about 100 Support Workers.

9. Program or Service Coordination is a big overhead plus admin/accounting staff. I would doubt that any small organisation can manage to break even with the NDIS. **Pricing needs to be revised upwards immediately otherwise smaller organisations will cease thus limiting choice for participants and carers.**
10. Claiming and invoicing is a much bigger task than NDIS initially planned. Constant changes to plans, requiring new agreements and Service Bookings; the regular failure of the portal to allow access; and participants changing from NDIS managed to Self Managed or Planned Managed all require time from staff.
11. At the commencement of the transition we were informed that our organisation would continue to receive ADHC funding to the amount of \$1,523,975 over the financial year, paid monthly and gradually reduced over the 12 month period. This arrangement changed several times and now 1 month from the end of that financial year we are short \$319,437 with the expectation that we will be receiving in June, less than \$2,643 which is the amount we received in May.

#### **Effect on participants and carers**

12. Some participants presently receiving support through ADHC have been told they are not eligible for NDIS;
13. Carers not being adequately informed of the process, i.e. they have their LAC meeting then get a plan but they don't realise it is then *their* responsibility to approach providers to sign Service Agreements to continue services. This is because under block funding they never had this much involvement with the financial side of things. Then, because they haven't approached service providers to sign the Service Agreement, providers continue to provide services under the block funding but the block funding money is being decreased and decreased.
14. The transition to NDIS, in some cases has left some participants worse off when it was intended to do the exact opposite. **Participants should have the opportunity to respond to the draft plan.**
15. Confusion by carers about what is covered by NDIS and what is not – entry, food, etc. has caused anxiety and suspicion.
16. Some carers of children up to the age of 8 have been told that respite is not appropriate for young children. They should be at home with their parents. It is not essential and necessary.
17. Concerns about travel costs
18. People receiving 1:3 funding when 1:3 support is clearly not suitable for them as they may suffer regular seizures, have behavioural issues or need

more individual support, even though they are in a group setting.  
Saturdays.

19. Vast differences between amounts that participants are delegated e.g. one participant \$900, another \$22,000 even though the services they were accessing prior to NDIS were very similar.

#### **NDIS contact and support:**

20. The scheme has been plagued by an IT “debacle”, complaints of inconsistency and poor-quality plans.
21. Significant delays in being able to access the portal due to it being off line or with an error; Portal was down: 3 May; 9 May; 12 May; 16 May
22. The messages from participants to service providers on the portal have the time of the sender sending the message but not the day. Sometimes, rather than write a reply in the portal, it is easier to phone the carer, but then you are left with a message still on your file. We cannot delete seen messages without a response.
23. A much simpler way of releasing a portion of the participants funds without having to completely end the service and then redoing the service booking 14 days later needs to be introduced.
24. The response to emails to NDIA is: Hello and thank you for your email. This is an automated response to acknowledge receipt of your email. There is currently a high volume of enquiries and as a result there is a delay in responding to these enquiries.  
If you have requested a review of your plan, you will be contacted within 14 days. A plan review may take up to 12 weeks to finalise. In the meantime please continue to use your plan as this will not jeopardise the outcome of the review. You will be contacted if we need more information to complete the review.  
We apologise for the delay. Other queries will be forwarded to an NDIA team member who will respond as soon as possible.

**Ray Palmer**  
**Riverlink Interchange Inc.**