



PARLIAMENTARY JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Reference No: SQ17-000173

Topic: Indigenous people with disability being incarcerated

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Question

Senator GALLACHER: There has been some media coverage recently about Indigenous people with disability being incarcerated in high numbers or overrepresented numbers. This is an area where you have an emerging group of planners. Can you—perhaps on notice—describe that to us.

Ms Gunn: Sure. I would be very happy to document it.

Senator GALLACHER: Out of 1,000 planners, are there 50 that look at it?

Mr Tidswell: We will take that question on notice.

Senator GALLACHER: It is an emerging area.

Mr Tidswell: Absolutely.

Mr Tidswell: It is important to say that we work closely with the jurisdictions, the states and territories. We meet, as a minimum, monthly with them, and we're all on the same page on this. The other thing we're trying to do as well in jurisdictions is making sure the mainstream service delivery structures don't default to this scheme, whether it's health, education or justice.

Senator GALLACHER: Without being brutal about it, there are probably enormous savings to the taxpayer there if we can get this right.

Ms Gunn: It's really important. With that integration interface at the time of release from prison, for example, we have a lovely model that we're now trying to roll out, testing with each of the jurisdictions about the agency staff being involved with the preplanning prior to release and making sure that we have all the supports in place for those people that are our responsibilities, to connect them up with all of the other services, such as housing and the external criminal justice processes, so that they are all connected and working collaboratively when the person does come out.

Senator GALLACHER: It's an emerging area—the social impact bonds. I think the first one was the Peterborough example in the UK, where they reduced recidivism and paid a dividend on the investment.

Ms Gunn: Absolutely.

Senator GALLACHER: So can we get a snapshot of where you're looking.

Mr Tidswell: We will come back with that on notice.

Answer:

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) reports that as at 30 June, 2016:

- There were 10,596 prisoners who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander accounting for just over a quarter (27 per cent) of the total Australian prisoner population.
- The rate of prisoners per 100,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population increased from 2,253 at 30 June, 2015 to 2,346 at 30 June 2016.
- The non-Indigenous imprisonment rate increased from 146 at 30 June 2015 to 154 prisoners per 100,000 non-Indigenous population at 30 June 2016.

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) is committed to introducing consistent and individualised practice approaches across all NDIA regions that builds on trial experience and industry best practice. Through the engagement of mainstream and community supports such as Health, Housing and Justice, the NDIA also promotes a whole of community response to identify and treat systemic issues faced by participants and their supporters, this is of particular importance for participants who are due for release from prison.

In March 2017, the NDIA released the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement Strategy (the Strategy), a commitment in this strategy is that all NDIA staff will be trained to understand and engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities in a way that demonstrates respect and support for Aboriginal language, heritage and culture or in the 'proper way'.

The Strategy recognises that effective engagement and relationship building takes time and plays a large role in how services connect with people and build trust. Therefore, it is vital that the NDIA engages with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in a way that supports their involvement.

The intended approach for planning for participants being released from prison is that the NDIA will engage in pre-planning six weeks prior to the release date. The participant can reengage with their Support Coordinator to complete a new NDIS Plan. Planning can be conducted face-to-face or via video conferencing (where technology is available). The new NDIS plan will focus on:

- Identifying the participant's goals and aspirations to successfully transition back into the community
- Engaging appropriate State, community and mainstream services in the first instance and
- Building the participant's capacity to live as autonomously as they can in the community.

The timing of engagement is therefore even more critical when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are due for release from prison. This is to ensure that the model of support above is implemented in a manner that respectful, inclusive and culturally appropriate on a community by community basis.

The model of early pre-planning has been successfully implemented in the Barwon site in Victoria during trial and transition, whereby a dedicated team developed consistent practices and strong relationships with community and mainstream services and support systems as well as NDIS funded support providers. Outcomes of this approach have indicated that where a positive support networks are established prior to a participant's release from prison, community re-integration has been more successful.

The focus for the NDIA now is to take learnings from the trial and testing of the model of pre-planning prior to release from prison and ensure consistent application across the NDIA. Further to this, where applicable an essential step is bringing together this model of early engagement with participants prior to release from prison with the guiding principles of the Strategy to support successful re-integration to the community for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are being released from prison.