



Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)  
Answer to Question on Notice

Inquiry into NDIS Planning

Reference No: SQ20-000271

**INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENTS CONSULTATION**

Question Date: 12 October 2020

Format: Spoken

**Question:**

Mr Hoffman:...We have been having, over the past month or more, multiple meetings with very large groups of people expressing their views, their thoughts, their concerns and their questions. We have done our best to answer and address some of those questions...we are establishing a smaller sub-working group to go through some of the detailed questions that people have about how it works with particular cohorts, for particular disability types, what we do for people who may have genuine trauma in their background—this may be a concern in terms of independent assessment—and how we handle the provision of information from existing professionals who may be involved with the person, and take that into account...

Senator CAROL BROWN: How many consultations have you had so far with the CEO forum?

Mr Hoffman: Lisa or Brett, do you have a specific number? We'd be happy to take that specific question on notice.

Senator CAROL BROWN: That's fine. If you could take on notice how many and when, that would be good.

Mr Hoffman: Yes.

**Answer:**

Since August 2020, the NDIA has undertaken three CEO Forum meetings, as outlined below:

- 28 August – CEO Forum meeting – NDIA CEO discussed ministerial announcement, including introduction of independent assessments
- 3 September – CEO Forum workshop on Independent Assessments
- 2 October – CEO Forum workshop on the pilot and evaluation of the tools

Since August 2020, the NDIA has undertaken 30 meetings with CEO Forum members outside of the dedicated meetings:

- 7 September – CEO meeting with 4 members of CEO Forum
- 16 September – CEO meeting with 8 members of CEO Forum
- August-September 2020 – 28 meetings with individual CEO Forum members

These conversations are ongoing and were preceded by consultations on the pilot.



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**Question:**

Senator CAROL BROWN: Who's chairing the advisory council subgroup?

Mr Hoffman: Brett, do you know or has it been done by the principal member?

Mr Bennett: I don't have that with me, Martin; I'll have to take that one on notice. I'm not sure exactly who the chair is.

Senator CAROL BROWN: Okay, that's fine. Again, their meeting dates and the membership of the subgroup would be good.

**Answer:**

The Independent Assessments (IAs) Subgroup (the Subgroup) is an NDIA convened subgroup chaired by Dr Sam Bennett, General Manager Policy, Advice and Research.

The Independent Advisory Council to the NDIS (Council) identified IAs as a priority for advice in its 2020-2021 Work Plan. The Subgroup was established by the NDIA to secure regular Council input to support the implementation of the IAs.

Membership of the Subgroup includes:

- Ms Jennifer Cullen, Council Member
- Ms Leah van Poppel, Council Member
- Ms Sam Paior, Council Member
- Ms Kerry Allan-Zinner, Council Member
- Mr Kevin Stone, Council Reference Group Member
- Mr Leanne Pearman, Council Reference Group Member.

The Subgroup will meet monthly, with the initial meeting scheduled for late October.



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## INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT TENDER

Question Date: 12 October 2020

Format: Spoken

### Question:

Senator ASKEW: ...Going back to the independent assessment panel: I know Senator Brown asked several questions around the open tender process and so on, but could you just give us the details of how that was advertised and what time frame people had to apply?

Mr Hoffman: I'd be very happy to. Would you mind if I took that on notice to get it exactly right? I don't have those specific details in front of me.

Senator ASKEW: That would be great, and also: how it was advertised; obviously, the time frame that was put on it; and what sort of structure they had to have to apply. I personally have had feedback saying that smaller organisations or independent occupational therapists didn't feel that they fitted the criteria and therefore did not apply to be considered as part of this, and yet most of their client base, actually, are the types of clients who would need to have independent assessments. So could we get a bit of a bigger picture on how it was and also whether we're looking for the larger organisations for cost reasons—obviously, to do with the multiple number that will be required? That is the meaning behind that one. I'll leave that with you as a question on notice.

### Answer:

A Request for Tender (RFT) entitled Independent Assessment Panel (Reference Number – 1000724626) was published on AusTender on 13 March 2020 and closed on 25 June 2020. This was conducted as an open tender and the RFT was open for 68 business days (104 calendar days).

Organisational size was not an RFT criteria or requirement. As outlined in the RFT documentation, a Tenderer was required to be a legal entity recognised under Australian law at the RFT closing time. The RFT documentation also explicitly noted that for those who did not think they could provide the required services on their own, they were encouraged to collaborate with other organisations to develop and submit a Tender. In such cases, for those who were wanting to tender together with a group of other organisations or individuals, it was a requirement to appoint one entity as the 'lead entity' to submit the Tender and, if successful, to enter the Panel Agreement with the NDIA.

Additionally, the Panel will remain 'live', meaning that other organisations can be added in future, and providing opportunity to encourage partnerships among organisations who may not think they can provide the required services on their own.



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Inquiry into NDIS Planning

Reference No: SQ20-000275

**OPEN LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS**

Question Date: 12 October 2020

Format: Spoken

**Question:**

Senator CAROL BROWN: Has the open letter on your website been sent directly to participants or their carers?

Mr Hoffman: Where we hold email addresses for them, we've used that method, trying to be consistent with the communications preferences that individual participants have.

Senator CAROL BROWN: Does that mean that they were posted, if that's their—

Mr Hoffman: We haven't Australia Post mailed letters to participants.

Senator CAROL BROWN: How do they get to see this open letter—word of mouth?

Mr Hoffman: As I said, through direct email, our social media channels, the website and disability representative organisations who pass it on et cetera.

Senator CAROL BROWN: Do you know what percentage of people prefer to receive their correspondence by email? I expect it's quite large percentage wise.

Mr Hoffman: Brad or Scott, do you have the numbers?

Mr Bennett: I haven't got them.

Mr McNaughton: Sorry, I don't have the breakdown of the numbers. I'd have to get that proportion split out of the ITT system for you and take it on notice.

**Answer:**

The open letter to participants was successfully delivered by email to 63,191 participants and their representatives.

As at 30 September 2020, 17.5% of participants had indicated to the NDIA that they preferred to receive correspondence electronically (e.g. via email). When considering that correspondence is also sent to participant representatives, 24% of whom prefer to receive correspondence electronically, 30% of participants are reached when electronic correspondence methods are used. Further, 58% of participants opt to receive digital notifications and reminders, such as for planning purposes.



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Inquiry into NDIS Planning

Reference No: SQ20-000276

**INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT CONSULTATION**

Question Date: 12 October 2020

Format: Spoken

**Question:**

Senator CAROL BROWN: When we were talking about consultation before and with the CEO forum, I didn't ask what it is exactly that you were consulting on because in the media release.

...

Are there people with disability as part of these consulting groups—well, the CEO forum?

Mr Hoffman: That group focuses on the disability representative organisations and the representatives that they have, or the members that they have, the people who represent that organisation. We have a participant reference group, which is comprised of participants—people with disability—and we're certainly actively engaged with them as well. I met with them not last week but the week before, and there's ongoing engagement with that group.

Senator CAROL BROWN: That's a reference group? Is that what you called it? I couldn't hear you.

Mr Hoffman: It's a participant reference group, so that is by definition participants, people with disability, yes.

Senator CAROL BROWN: Yes. Was your meeting with them around consultation on the independent assessments?

Mr Hoffman: Yes, the key agenda item was independent assessments.

Senator CAROL BROWN: Was that the first time you'd met with them about this issue?

Mr Hoffman: No, it was not. There had been earlier meetings with that group on this topic.

Senator CAROL BROWN: If you could provide on notice the meeting times, that would be great

**Answer:**

Mr Martin Hoffman met with the Participant Reference Group on 7 May 2020 and 30 September 2020.



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Reference No: SQ20-000277

**INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENTS**

Question Date: 12 October 2020

Format: Written

**Question:**

- 3) When was the 'independent assessment pilot learnings and ongoing evaluation plan' document (available at <https://www.ndis.gov.au/participants/independent-assessments/independent-assessment-pilot>) first created?
- a. Were there any evaluation reports or other documents relating to the two pilot programs that existed prior to this document? Could they be provided?
  - b. When will the second pilot be restarted?
  - c. When was the decision taken to discontinue the second pilot? Could any internal NDIA or DSS correspondence relating to this decision be provided?
  - d. When was the decision taken to restart the second pilot? Could any internal NDIA or DSS correspondence relating to this decision be provided?

**Answer:**

3) The 'independent assessment pilot learnings and ongoing evaluation plan' document was finalised and released on the NDIS website on 30 September 2020.

a. The 'independent assessment pilot learnings and ongoing evaluation plan' document released on the NDIS website on 30 September 2020 is the final evaluation document covering the pilot up until this time.

b. The NDIA restarted the second pilot on 23 October 2020.

c. Due to coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic concerns, the second pilot was temporarily discontinued from 19 March 2020, but always with the intention it would restart when conditions permitted. Information regarding the NDIA's decision to postpone the pilot can be found here: <https://www.ndis.gov.au/participants/independent-assessments/independent-assessment-pilot/independent-assessment-pilot-iap-archived>.

d. At the time of postponing the pilot, there had always been the intention to restart when conditions permitted. As such, this remained part of general, ongoing operational discussions within the Agency throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and did not form a separate decision.



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Reference No: SQ20-000278

## INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENTS

Question Date: 12 October 2020

Format: Written

**Question:**

- 6) Could a list be provided of all components of independent assessments that have been or are being consulted on?
- a. Could names of organisations, individuals or Government departments subject to each item also be provided?

**Answer:**

6. The NDIA have been consulting on various elements of the use of Independent Assessments (IAs) over a number of years, including in the lead up to, during and after, the first IA pilot in NSW from November 2018 to April 2019. More recently this culminated in the release of Independent Assessment Framework, information on the Independent Assessment Toolkit, and an Evaluation of the First Independent Assessment Pilot. Further consultation will occur over the coming months in relation to how IAs will be used for access and planning decisions, and how they will apply for young children under 7.

Components being consulted are:

- Independent Assessment Policy and Design considerations
  - Cohorts
  - Access at full scheme
  - Planning and plan flexibility
- a. The NDIA has consulted with the following organisations on IAs:
- State and territory governments
  - Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT)
  - Access Plus (WA Deaf Society)
  - ADHD WA
  - Amaze
  - Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) NT/SA
  - Australian Autism Advisory Board
  - Autism Queensland
  - Better Hearing Australia (WA)
  - Blind Citizens Australia
  - Blind Citizens WA
  - Brain Injury Australia
  - Carers Australia
  - Caring For Carers Australia
  - Central Desert Shire
  - Central Queensland Community Suicide Prevention Network
  - Children and Young People with Disability Australia

- Community Mental Health Australia
- Consumers of Mental Health WA (Inc.)
- Deaf Australia
- Deafness Forum
- Dementia Australia
- Dementia NT
- Developmental Disability Western Australia
- Disability Advocacy Network Australia
- Down Syndrome Australia
- Down Syndrome Qld
- Down Syndrome Western Australia
- Downs Syndrome Association Victoria
- Early Childhood Intervention Australia
- Encircle
- Epilepsy Queensland Inc.
- Epilepsy WA
- Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV)
- Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre Inc.
- Every Australian Counts
- First Peoples Disability Network
- Homeless Youth
- Huntington's Western Australia
- Inclusion Australian Government
- JFA Purple Orange
- Lived Experience Network South Australia
- Mental Health Australia
- Mental Health Victoria
- Motor Neuron Disease Association of Western Australia
- MS Queensland
- National Disability Services
- National Ethnic Disability Alliance
- Neurological Council of WA
- Ngala
- NO FASD Australia
- North Townsville Community Hub Inc.
- NT Shelter
- Peer-to-Peer Networks WA
- People with Disability Australia
- QLD Mental Health Commission
- QLD Youth Housing Coalition
- Qshelter
- Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council (QAIHC)
- Queensland AIDS Council (QuAC)
- Queensland Alliance for Mental Health
- Queensland Association of Special Education Leaders Inc.
- Queensland Collective for Inclusive Education (QCIE)
- Queensland Council Of Social Service(QCOSS)
- Queensland Foster and Kinship Care (QFKC)
- Queenslanders with Disability Network (QDN)
- Rare Voices Australia
- Red Cross Homelessness Hub Townsville
- Relationships Australia
- SA/NT Multiple Sclerosis Society

- SACROSS
- Self Advocacy Resource Unit
- Sharehouse Youth Program Townsville
- South Australian Association of State School Organisations (SAASSO)
- South West Autism Network Inc.
- Spina Bifida Hydrocephalus (SBH) Queensland Inc.
- Sunshine Coast Citizen Advocacy
- Synapse (formerly Brain Injury Assoc of Queensland)
- The Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara Womens Council (NPY Womens Council)
- The Oasis Centre TSV
- WA Alliance to End Homelessness
- WA Individualised Services (WAIS)
- Western Australia Foundation for Deaf Children
- Women in Disability SA
- Women with Disability Australia
- Wuchopperen Health Service
- Young People in Nursing Homes
- Youthworx NT



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Inquiry into NDIS Planning

Reference No: SQ20-000279

**INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENTS**

Question Date: 12 October 2020

Format: Written

**Question:**

9) Could all actuarial modelling or other advice be provided showing the impact of independent assessments into the future?

**Answer:**

A summary of the Scheme Actuary's annual financial sustainability report is included in the 2019–20 Annual Report, which includes scheme projections. The 2019-20 Annual Report can be found here: <https://www.ndis.gov.au/about-us/publications/annual-report>.



Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee  
Answer to Question on Notice

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Inquiry into NDIS Planning

Reference No: SQ20-000280

**INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENTS**

Question Date: 12 October 2020

Format: Written

**Question:**

10) What will be the total cost of implementation of independent assessments?

**Answer:**

The tender for the Independent Assessments (IAs) Panel is not yet finalised and, as such, total costs are not yet known.

The NDIS anticipates that the introduction of IAs will save participants somewhere between \$130 million and \$170 million on assessments associated with accessing the NDIS.