

NDIS participant experience in rural, regional and remote Australia

Hearing – 17/10/2024

NSW Health Response to Questions on Notice

QUESTION 1 – Page 5

Senator HUGHES: What percentage of your mental health patients would have NDIS plans?

Mr Spittal: I will have to take that question on notice, but a number of people in that service have NDIS plans. The NDIA is just about to appoint a health liaison officer who will work specifically in that area because of the number of clients that we have.

Senator HUGHES: In mental health?

Mr Spittal: Yes.

ANSWER

NSW Health inpatient data systems do not currently provide reliable data on a person's NDIS status, therefore the total proportion of consumers with NDIS plans cannot be calculated.

On 2 October 2024, there were 118 people across NSW (17 in rural and regional local health districts) recorded as being in a mental health inpatient bed beyond their clinically estimated date of discharge, awaiting a NDIS response. This represents approximately 4-5% of available NSW mental health beds (since July 2024 local health districts reported an average of 2,669 available mental health beds). This figure is an underestimate of the proportion of admitted mental health consumers who are NDIS participants, because it does not include NDIS participants who are receiving clinical care but have not yet reached their estimated date of discharge.

QUESTION 2 – Page 6

Mr Spittal: There certainly is. There is, at a design level, whole-of-government-level collaboration across the state departments and an interaction with NDIS and Commonwealth players. As I said, that is in the early stages. You would expect that, across multiple levels and departments of government at this stage of such a significant reform. There is work happening at the coalface which is also having a direct effect. I mentioned before the health liaison officer that the NDIA were appointing to look after some of our mental health clients. That will be the second of those types of positions in our district. There are a number across the state. The introduction of those positions has made a fundamental improvement in the level of care for a specific individual, having regard to the way that the health systems and NDIS are able to come together. In the real world of delivering real things to real people in rural and remote communities, it often comes down to the collaborative intent of individuals on the ground to make things happen. Those liaison officer positions, frankly, have been a godsend across New South Wales since their introduction.

Senator URQUHART: For how long have they been in place?

Mr Spittal: I will have to take that on notice. My understanding is that it has been a relatively recent introduction, in the last few years.

ANSWER

The National Disability Insurance Agency employs Hospital Liaison Officers (HLOs) to work directly with the health system. Five HLOs started working in NSW in March 2020. As of October 2024, there are now 25 HLOs for NSW/ACT.

QUESTION 3 – Page 6-7

Senator URQUHART: Are you able to provide, maybe on notice, any guidelines or how they work, in a paper document? Is there anything that you can provide that gives us a little bit more of an idea about what their role is? Obviously, with liaison, I understand that. But who are they liaising with and where does the direction come from?

Mr Spittal: I will take that on notice. That is perhaps something that NDIA and New South Wales Health can jointly provide to you.

ANSWER

The role of HLOs is outlined on the [NDIS Website](#).