

NDIS participant experience in rural, regional and remote Australia

Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: NDIS Independent Review recommendations and action items

Question reference number: IQ25-000014

Question asked by: Libby Coker

Type of Question: Written. **Hansard Page/s:** N/A

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 19 February 2025

Question:

6. a. Please provide an update on what actions have been taken in relation to Recommendation 4 and associated action items of the NDIS Independent Review: Support all people with disability to navigate mainstream, foundational and NDIS service systems.
- b. Please provide an update on what actions have been taken in relation to Recommendation 14 and associated action items of the NDIS Independent Review: Improve access to supports for First Nations participants across Australia and for all participants in remote communities through alternative commissioning arrangements.

Answer:

6.a. A joint Commonwealth, state and territory government response to the NDIS Review is in train.

In parallel, the Australian Government invested \$20.0 million in 2024-25 Budget over 2 years from 2024-25 for initial design and consultation work on reforms to help National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants and people with disability navigate services.

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) is working with an advisory committee, including membership from the Independent Advisory Council and Disability Representative and Carers Organisations, to co-design an approach to navigator functions.

Consultations have commenced with the intermediaries' market, including support coordinator providers and partners in the community, who continue to play an important role in delivering support to participants and their families.

b. Please refer to the answer to Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme question number IQ25-000016 for information on the Australian Government's Alternative Commissioning pilot, announced in the 2023-24 Budget to explore alternative options to NDIS service commissioning in remote and First Nations communities facing persistent market challenges.

NDIS participant experience in rural, - and remote Australia

Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Alternative Commissioning

Question reference number: IQ25-000016

Question asked by: Libby Coker

Type of Question: Written. **Hansard Page/s:** N/A

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 19 February 2025

Question:

9. a. Please provide an update on the government's alternative commissioning trials.
b. Is the alternative commissioning trial in Maningrida (NT) still in progress? Please provide an update on this trial, including:
i. How many active NDIS participants are in Maningrida?
ii. How many service providers are servicing Maningrida?
iii. What alternative commissioning strategies are being trialled?
iv. What impact has the Maningrida trial had on NDIS plan utilisation in the community?
v. What are the learnings and outcomes from the trial to date?
c. Is there a plan to expand alternative commissioning to other communities?

Answer:

9. a. As an outcome of the independent National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Review, the Australian Government provided \$7.6 million through the 2023-24 Budget to explore and develop alternative commissioning models that will better meet the disability support needs and improve the outcomes of NDIS participants and their community.

The Alternative Commissioning pilot will create opportunities for place-based, community-led co-design of culturally appropriate services to strengthen the First Nations disability sector and build a sustainable supply of NDIS services to meet participant needs in remote areas.

Two trial sites have been announced: Maningrida in the Northern Territory, which began in August 2023, and Katanning and surrounding areas in Western Australia, which began in August 2024.

The Department of Social Services (the department) and the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) are working in partnership with First Nations and community leaders in remote communities, with participants and families, the Northern Territory and Western Australian governments, other government departments, disability providers and other key stakeholders to develop, implement, evaluate and report on the process and outcomes of Alternative Commissioning pilots.

b. Yes, the trial in Maningrida is progressing.

- i. As at 13 February 2025, there are 101 active NDIS participants in Maningrida and surrounding homelands.
ii. 55 service providers, including Darwin-based support coordinators and respite providers, received payments from NDIS participant plans in 2024-25. Providers primarily serve Maningrida participants on a fly in fly out, or drive in drive out basis. Alternative commissioning includes a focus on opportunities to build local service delivery approaches.

iii. Community-centred commissioning design is a key feature of alternative commissioning. The NDIA is collaborating with the Maningrida community to create alternative commissioning strategies, including Direct Commissioning for Adult and Children Therapies and Coordinated Funding Proposals for Support Coordinators. The NDIA is partnering with Nja-Marleya Cultural Leaders and the Justice Group to uphold cultural authority in these initiatives.

iv. Plan utilisation will be investigated as part of the independent evaluation.

v. Provision of clear advice on the NDIS and alternative commissioning approaches, particularly for community members whose first language is not English, has been crucial to build community understanding. Ongoing engagement with individuals and community representatives has been important in building community trust and confidence.

The person-centred consultation process to refine and finalise alternative commissioning approaches with participants and community leaders in alignment with cultural requirements takes time and has been subject to delays due to wet weather and Sorry business.

c. Alternative commissioning is also being trialled in Katanning, a regional town 500 kilometres from Perth, and surrounding areas in Western Australia.