

Chapter Two

Trial sites

2.1 This chapter provides an update on the progress of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) trial sites. It collates data and outcomes from both the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) and the Western Australian Disability Services Commission (DSC) managed trial sites.

Highlights of the trial sites

2.2 As of 30 June 2015, both the above organisations managing NDIS trial sites, reported that 22 936 requests for access had been lodged by people with disabilities to become participants in the NDIS.¹ Of these people, 20 322 were found to be eligible, which equates to approximately 90 per cent of all access requests, and 1674 were found ineligible. In addition, 17 991 participant plans were approved across the trial sites.² This approval rate represents a 90 per cent achievement against the 30 June 2015 cumulative bilateral target for participants with approved plans.

2.3 Furthermore, NDIA managed a 94 per cent achievement against the bilateral agreements for its trial sites with 17 303 active participants receiving approved plans.

2.4 The NDIA reports that 'the most common funded supports in dollar terms in its plans are daily tasks in shared living arrangements, community participation, and assistance with personal activities. The most commonly funded support in South Australia, however, is early childhood support.'³

2.5 The NDIA notes that 'overall, \$952.8 million has been committed for participant support costs'. From these funds NSW and Victoria received the lion's share at \$343.6 million for NSW and \$295.5 for Victoria. South Australia received \$111 million, Tasmania \$93 million, ACT \$64.6 million, Perth Hills \$41.2 million and \$3 million went to the Northern Territory. The My Way trial reported committing \$17.9 million in plan supports for the financial year for participants in the Lower South West trial site.

2.6 The average annualised package cost across for NDIA managed trial sites is \$33 600 once the large residential centres of Stockton and Colanda are excluded. Not to be compared, the WA My Way cost was \$26 014 (funded and no funding requested) noting that the WA government provides some services at no cost.⁴

1 An access request is a formal request by an individual for a determination of eligibility to access the scheme. This includes all requests and is not unique to single participants.

2 National Disability Insurance Agency, *Quarterly Report to COAG Disability Reform Council*, 30 June 2015, pp 16, 19.

3 National Disability Insurance Agency, *Quarterly Report to COAG Disability Reform Council*, 30 June 2015, pp 16, 19.

4 Disability Services Commission, *Quarterly Report to the Commonwealth Government*, 1 April 2015 to 30 June 2015 (fourth quarterly report), p. 6.

The planned roll-out

2.7 The 17 April 2015 COAG communiqué originally envisaged that the new round of bilateral agreements for the transition to the full scheme would be agreed in July-August 2015.⁵ However, as the Assistant Minister for Social Services, Senator the Hon Mitch Fifield informed the Senate on 18 August 2015, he was still in negotiations with the states and territories on the bilateral agreements.

2.8 The first four trial sites that began operations from 1 July 2013—the Hunter in New South Wales, the Barwon region in Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia, (as listed in Table 2.1)—continued to grow and thrive throughout 2014–15. Since 1 July 2014 three more trial sites commenced operations.

2.9 As of 1 July 2014, four more sites commenced operations. The Australian Capital Territory (ACT), which is a full territory-wide operation across all age groups—so is effectively already progressing through transition, the Barkly trial site in Northern Territory, while expansive geographically—is centred on the Tennant Creek area, and in Western Australia there are two sites—the NDIA-run NDIS Perth Hills trial site and the WA Disability Services Commission run NDIS My Way trial site in the Lower South West region of the state.

2.10 The planned roll-out of the NDIS is shown in Table 2.1. From 1 July 2016 most trials sites will progress into the 'general transition period' before full scheme.

Table 2.1: Planned NDIS roll-out

	Trial Period			General Transition Period			Full Scheme	
	July 2013	July 2014	July 2015	July 2016	July 2017	July 2018	July 2019	July 2020
ACT	TRIAL PERIOD			FULL NDIS				
NSW	TRIAL PERIOD			ROLL-OUT PERIOD			FULL NDIS	
NT	TRIAL PERIOD			ROLL-OUT PERIOD			FULL NDIS	
QLD	TRIAL PERIOD			ROLL-OUT PERIOD			FULL NDIS	
SA	TRIAL PERIOD			ROLL-OUT PERIOD			FULL NDIS	
TAS	TRIAL PERIOD			ROLL-OUT PERIOD			FULL NDIS	
WA	NDIS TRIAL PERIOD MYWAY TRIAL PERIOD			NO AGREEMENT ON FULL ROLL-OUT				
VIC	TRIAL PERIOD			ROLL-OUT PERIOD			FULL NDIS	

The trial sites

2.11 The trial sites now number eight in total—the locations are:

- The Hunter trial site – Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, and Maitland Local Government Areas (LGAs) in New South Wales.
- The Barwon trial site – Greater Geelong, Surf Coast, Queenscliff and Colac-Otway LGAs in Victoria.
- The South Australian trial site – 0-14 year olds.
- The Tasmanian trial site – 15-24 year olds.
- The Australian Capital Territory site.

5 COAG communiqué, 17 April 2015, p. 4.

- Busselton, Lower South West Region of Western Australia.
- The Perth Hills trial site - Swan, Kalamunda and Mundaring LGAs in Western Australia.
- The Barkly region trial site in the Northern Territory.

Additional trial sites

2.12 Throughout the year there have been discussions at the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) about additional trial sites. The 17 April 2015 COAG communiqué stated that both Queensland and the Northern Territory had agreed with the Commonwealth to discuss new trial sites.⁶ The NDIA had previously noted that the NDIS would eventually support 97 000 Queenslanders once it is roll out across Queensland over a three-year period from 1 July 2016.⁷

2.13 On 25 September 2015, the Prime Minister, the Hon Malcom Turnbull MP and the Queensland Premier, the Hon Anastacia Palaszczuk MP jointly announced a Queensland trial for young people under 18 in Townsville, Charters Towers and Palm Island commencing in early 2016.⁸

2.14 The committee also notes that the Commonwealth Government allocated additional funding in the 2015-16 Budget to start delivering early intervention services for up to 2 000 children under the age of 18 in Western Sydney from 1 July 2015.⁹

2.15 Hon. John Ajaka MLC, NSW Minister for Disability Services announced the launch of Western Sydney trial site on 1 July 2015 for the Nepean, Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury region.¹⁰ The second part of the WA NDIS My Way trial commenced in the Cockburn-Kwinana region south of Perth from 1 July 2015.

Committee visits and public hearings

2.16 Since the establishment of NDIS trial sites, the committee has endeavoured to visit all trials sites. During the last twelve months the committee visited, and in most cases undertook hearings, in each of the new trials sites that commenced operations from 1 July 2014, as well as Queensland. The committee held visits or hearings in:

6 COAG communiqué, 17 April 2015, p. 5.

7 National Disability Insurance Agency, website: <http://www.ndis.gov.au/about-us/our-sites/gld> (accessed 9 September 2015).

8 Prime Minister of Australia, The Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP media release: NDIS Set To Improve Lives Of Northern Queenslanders, <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/2015-09-25/ndis-set-improve-lives-northern-queenslanders>.

9 Australian Government, Budget 2015-16, *Budget Measures, Budget Paper No.2, 2015-16*, p. 164.

10 Media Release from The Assistant Minister for Social Services, Senator the Hon Mitch Fifield, 1 July 2015. <http://www.mitchfifield.com/Media/MediaReleases/tabid/70/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/958/FifieldAjaka--Joint-Media-Release--NDIS-EARLY-ROLL-OUT-KICKS-OFF--1-July-2015.aspx>, (accessed 9 September 2015).

- Brisbane on 13 March;
- Canberra on 27 March;
- Busselton, Western Australia on 8 April;
- Perth Hills, Western Australia on 9 April;
- Visited the Tennant Creek community in the Northern Territory; and
- Darwin, Northern Territory on 21 July.

2.17 Early in the year the committee undertook a hearing in Brisbane to take evidence from service providers regarding their readiness to transition into the Scheme. In March 2015, the Committee held a hearing into the ACT trial site where it heard from participants, family members, carers, service providers and the ACT Government and NDIA officials. In the afternoon, the committee conducted a roundtable hearing into advocacy from the following organisations:

- Disability Advocacy Network of Australia (DANA);
- A.C.T. Disability, Aged and Carer Advocacy Service (ADACAS);
- Disability Advocacy NSW;
- Advocacy Tasmania Inc;
- JFA Purpleorange (South Australia);
- Disability Advocacy and Information Service Inc;
- Our Voice (Inclusion Australia); and
- Australian Cross Disability Alliance (ACDA). ACDA organisations members are:
 - Children with Disability Australia (CDA)
 - First Peoples Disability Network Australia (FPDN)
 - National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA)
 - People with Disability Australia (PWDA)
 - Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA)

2.18 In April 2015, the committee visited both Western Australian trials sites undertaking hearings at each. And finally, in July 2015, members of the committee visited Tennant Creek and the NDIA Barkly trial site office where they met with participants, family members and carers, and the local NDIA staff. The committee members also met with representatives of the Anyinginyi Health Aboriginal Corporation and the Julalikari Council Aboriginal Corporation.

2.19 The committee found these meeting extremely useful and would like to extend its thanks and appreciation to all those it met during its visit to Tennant Creek.

2.20 The following day, 21 July 2015, the committee met in Darwin and undertook a hearing to take evidence on the Barkley trial site from service providers and community organisations. The committee also took evidence from the Northern Territory Minister for Disability Services, the Hon John Elferink MLA.

2.21 The committee would like to thank all those who attended the hearings.

Progress in the trial sites

2.22 The committee understands that all trial sites are progressing well with participant satisfaction rates high to very high in NDIA run trial sites. Encouragingly, the transition of participants is advancing well and in many cases meeting bilateral targets for 30 June 2015. Indicative average individual package costs, when large residential facilities are taken out of the cost calculation show that the average annualised package cost is remaining generally under the bilateral target price. The range of supports is developing, especially as market opportunities arise with more providers registering. The Agency's capacity and ability has also improved, providing more assistance for participants transitioning into the scheme.

Participant satisfaction

2.23 The committee notes that the NDIA's survey methodology was the subject of recommendation nine in last year's report. The process described in the eighth quarterly report¹¹ provides greater confidence in the satisfaction rating as the survey results are now collected after the planning process by someone other than the planner. The NDIA annual report notes that 'Participant satisfaction remains high':

Of the 1644 participants satisfaction with the Agency has remained very high in recent months. Satisfaction is reported on a scale of very poor (-2) to very good (+2), with neutral being 0. The participant satisfaction level is currently 1.63, consistent with the March results.¹²

2.24 The WA NDIS My Way scheme quarterly report, mentions a number of independent surveys it has undertaken and has apparently found high levels of satisfaction with the My Way service and the My Way Coordinator role:

[A]n external consultant (Patterson's Research Group) conducted an independent consumer satisfaction survey to gain insight into how the WA NDIS My Way model is working for people with disability, their families and carers. Again, the survey results indicate high satisfaction levels across fundamental areas including the planning process, My Way Coordinator role, access to supports and services and inclusion in the general community.¹³

Participants—numbers and access

2.25 The committee notes that presently, there are a total of 19 885 active and inactive participants in both the NDIA-run trials sites and the WA NDIS My Way sites. Of these, 17 991 participants have received an approved plan. The NDIA note that of its 17 303 approved plans, 4 per cent are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders (ATSI) and another 4 per cent come from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

11 Disability Services Commission, *Quarterly Report to the Commonwealth Government*, 1 April 2015 to 30 June 2015 (fourth quarterly report), p. 44.

12 National Disability Insurance Agency, *Report on the sustainability of the Scheme*, 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2015, prepared by the Scheme Actuary, p. 27.

13 Disability Services Commission, *Quarterly Report to the Commonwealth Government*, 1 April 2015 to 30 June 2015 (fourth quarterly report), data extracted on 30 June 2015, p. 25.

(CALD) backgrounds. However, the number of Indigenous participants is fewer than expected overall. The NDIA surmise that this is due to under reporting of Indigenous status in the NDIA's early application records.¹⁴

Table 2.2: Key statistics of all NDIS trial sites – as of 30 June 2015

Measure	Hunter (NSW)	SA	Tas	Barwon (Vic)	ACT	Barkly (NT)	Perth Hills	MyWay (WA)	Total
Average annualised cost of packages for Q4 2014-15 (\$)	38,973	18,234	56,940	35,317	45,361	50,327	34,894	26,014	306,060
Number of participants in bilateral agreement	5,030	4,688	960	4,521	1,537	103	1,642	1,404	19,885
Access requests	5,965	6,068	1,175	5,386	2,314	79	1,576	373 [^]	22,936
Accepted as eligible	4,829	5,506	1,053	4,656	2,037	68	1,396	777	20,322
<i>Percentage deemed eligible compared with expected</i>	99%	118%	119%	105%	133%	45%	85%	55%	102%
Number of participants with approved plans	4,605	4,660	959	4,392	1,427	61	1,199	688	17,991
<i>Percentage with approved plans compared to expected</i>	92%	99%	106%	97%	93%	41%	73%	49%	90%
Ineligible	670	349	43	350	143	6	106	7	1,674
Other	466	213	79	380	134	5	74	n/a	1,351
Average days from access request to plan approval ⁺	89	128	115	90	58	36	31	53	n/a
Review of decisions (internal)	77	50	4	129	31	0	11	0	302
Participants accessing mainstream services	81%	88%	73%	86%	87%	82%	66%	n/a [*]	n/a

Source: National Disability Insurance Agency, *Report on the sustainability of the scheme*, 1 July 2013 – 30 June 2015, July 2015, p. 3. Disability Services Commission, *Quarterly Report to the Commonwealth Government*, 1 April 2015 to 30 June 2015 (fourth quarterly report), p. 6. *Participants access to mainstream services does not appear as a disaggregated measure in the WA My Way quarterly reports. ^MyWay transferred individuals directly into the scheme on 1 July 2014; this figure represents those who have requested access since the scheme began, p. 22 of the DSC 30 June 2015 Quarterly Report. +The data for *Average days from access request to plan approval* is from the 31 March 2015 NDIA quarterly report; this data was not provided in the 30 June 2015 quarterly report.

2.26 WA My Way has a similar participation rate of ATSI as the NDIA, while its CALD representation is only just above 1 per cent.¹⁵

2.27 Table 2.2 also presents the participant statistics across all trial sites at 30 June 2015. It shows the bilateral numbers agreed between the Commonwealth and

14 National Disability Insurance Agency, *Quarterly Report to COAG Disability Reform Council*, 30 June 2015, p 18.

15 Disability Services Commission, *Quarterly Report to the Commonwealth Government*, 1 April 2015 to 30 June 2015 (fourth quarterly report), data extracted on 30 June 2015, p. 15.

the respective governments for the anticipated number of participants entering the Scheme and the number of participants that actually receive an approved plan.

2.28 The table shows the cumulative percentile measure of *Percentage with approved plans compared to expected* that indicates a 90 per cent achievement for plans approved against the cumulative [NDIA and My Way trial sites] bilateral agreement number of 19 885 at this point in time. Individually, the NDIA managed 94 per cent against its collective target—a commendable achievement for the Agency.

2.29 On these measures, the Tasmanian trial site recorded the highest percentile intake exceeding its bilateral target of participants with approved plans by reaching 106 per cent. These results were followed by South Australia at 99 per cent and then Barwon, Victoria on 97 per cent.

2.30 The committee notes that while most of the sites are on track to reach their bilateral targets of *'Number of participants with approved plans'*, a number have actually exceeded the other bilateral measure of *'Percentage deemed eligible compared with expected'*. This measure captures the number of participants that have been assessed as being eligible to enter the Scheme. For example, the ACT has assessed and found over 133 per cent of participants eligible against the point in-time bilateral agreed intake, likewise Tasmania is at 119 per cent and South Australia at 118 per cent. Though in both the South Australian and Tasmanian data, it is evident that while participants are processed as 'eligible' quickly, the data shows that they have the long wait times of 115-128 days until an approved plan is finalised.

2.31 Other prominent issues include: 1) the Western Australia trial sites lower than expected results in approving plans or eligibility—Perth Hills at 73 per cent of its bilateral target and My Way at 49 per cent of its target; and 2) The Northern Territory's low number of plan approvals at 41 per cent highlights the significant challenge of trying to deliver such a significant social reform across Australia particularly in rural and remote locations.

Participant outcomes

2.32 This section provides some of the information on participant plans against a primary disability in both the NDIA-run trial sites and the WA My Way site.

2.33 The top four primary disabilities listed in a total of 17 303 NDIA approved plans are: Autism (5 387 plans at 31 per cent), Intellectual disability (2 736 plans at 16 per cent), Other Neurological (1 401 plans at 8 per cent) and Developmental delay (1 395 at 8 per cent).

2.34 Table 2.3 provides plan numbers by state and territory. In terms of the spread of particular disabilities across jurisdiction, South Australia has the highest proportion of participants with autism and related disorders; it also has a high proportion with developmental and global developmental delay (23 per cent combined). While autism and developmental delay dominate the disabilities overall, the Northern Territory disabilities focus on Other Neurological (21 per cent), Other Physical (18 per cent) and Intellectual Disability (18 per cent).

Table 2.3. NDIA – Participant plans by primary disability support category

Primary Disability (%)	NSW	SA	TAS	VIC	ACT	NT	WA	Total	#Plans
Autism and Related Disorders	23	49	30	22	25	3	40	31	5,397
Cerebral Palsy	5	3	7	4	6	11	6	5	793
Deafness/Hearing Loss	3	3	0	1	2	0	1	2	358
Developmental Delay	4	13	2	7	19	3	1	8	1,395
Down Syndrome	4	2	7	4	4	3	5	4	666
Global Developmental Delay	3	10	2	3	5	5	6	5	853
Intellectual Disability	20	2	36	22	14	18	17	16	2,736
Multiple Sclerosis	2	0	0	3	2	2	3	2	285
Schizophrenia	6	0	1	6	1	5	1	3	558
Other Intellectual/learning	5	4	6	5	5	5	6	5	869
Other Neurological	13	2	5	10	6	21	8	8	1,401
Other Physical	4	2	2	3	5	18	4	3	566
Other Psychiatric	3	0	1	8	2	0	0	3	532
Other Sensory/Speech	5	9	1	3	5	5	3	5	894
Total	4,605	4,660	959	4,392	1,427	61	1,199	100%	17,303

Source: National Disability Insurance Agency, *Report on the sustainability of the scheme*, 1 July 2013 – 30 June 2015, July 2015, p.29, p. 51.

Table 2.4. My Way – Participant plans by primary disability support category

Primary disability	%	#Plans	CALD	ATSI	Male	Female
Acquired brain injury*	3%	26	0	0	16	10
Autism	19%	151	3	6	120	31
Deaf/blind	0%	3	0	0	0	3
Developmental delay	3%	22	1	1	16	6
Hearing	1%	7	0	0	4	3
Intellectual disability	34%	268	3	15	155	113
Neurological	10%	75	2	2	30	45
Other	0%	1	0	0	0	1
Physical	14%	108	0	4	53	55
Psychiatric/psychosocial disorders	12%	92	1	1	38	54
Learning/attention deficit disorder	0%	1	0	0	1	0
Vision	3%	23	0	0	10	13
Total	100%	777	10	29	443	334

Source: Disability Services Commission, *Quarterly Report to the Commonwealth Government*, 1 April 2015 to 30 June 2015 (fourth quarterly report), p. 6, p.15. * Comparable data on acquired brain injury is not published in NDIA reports.

2.35 In Table 2.4, of the 777 approved plans in the WA My Way site, the top four primary disabilities listed are: Intellectual disability (268 plans at 34 per cent), Autism (151 plans at 19 per cent), Physical (108 plans at 14 per cent) and Psychiatric/psychosocial disorders (92 at 12 per cent).

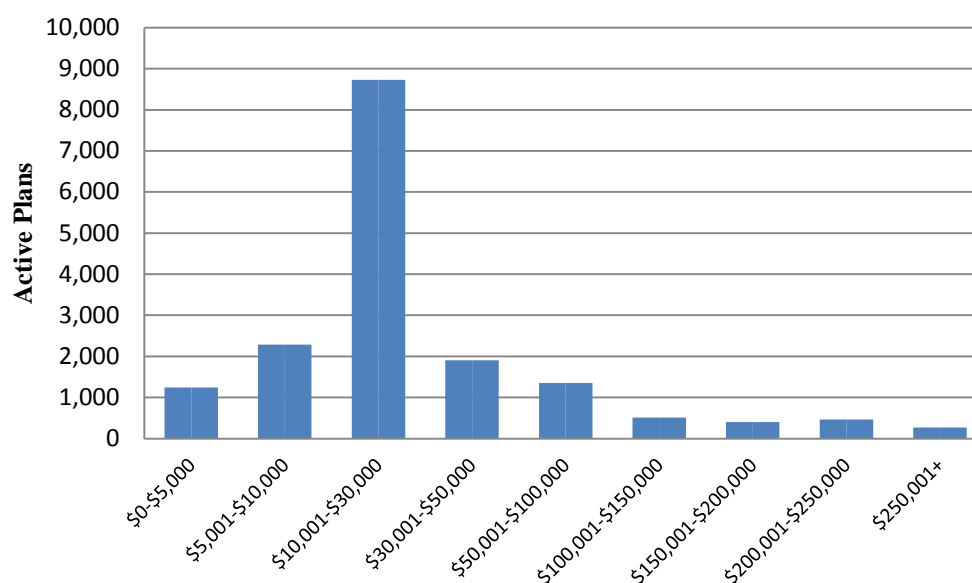
Committed supports

2.36 Overall, \$952.8 million has been committed for participant support costs. The NDIA Scheme Actuary notes that these 'support costs are mostly allocated to a small proportion of high-cost participants'. This group consists of more than 1600 participants representing just 10 per cent of total participant numbers that have plans worth more than \$100 000. These participants' plans account for 47 per cent of the total committed supports—\$148.2 million.¹⁶

2.37 The NDIA's quarterly report notes a slightly higher percentile for those with plans over \$100 000:

...the majority of participants have annualised package costs of between \$5,001 and \$30,000 (64%) and few participants have high cost plans of over \$100,000 (10%). Of the 17,155 active participants with approved plans, 71% have an annualised package cost of less than \$30,000. This group accounts for only 26% of annualised committed funding. Conversely, 10% of participants have an annualised package cost over \$100,000 and these participants account for 49% of total committed supports.¹⁷

Figure 2.1: Distribution of annualised support costs



2.38 Figure 2.1 displays the distribution of the active plans in the NDIA run sites. The committee notes that even with the significant skew, as mentioned above in term of concentration of funds, the average annualised package cost across all trial sites is approximately \$38 400. The NDIA goes on to note that if the large residential centres, Stockton and Colanda, are excluded from this calculation, then the average annualised package cost comes down to \$33 600.

16 National Disability Insurance Agency, *Report on the sustainability of the Scheme*, 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2015, prepared by the Scheme Actuary. p. 16.

17 National Disability Insurance Agency, *Report on the sustainability of the Scheme*, 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2015, July 2015, p. 46.

2.39 The NDIA eighth quarterly report indicated that despite average package costs being higher than expected, the overall cost of the scheme is in line with expectations. The NDIA state that the higher costs are due to the lower number of low cost participants entering the scheme. However, the number of higher cost participants and medium cost participants are in line with expectations.¹⁸

2.40 The quarterly report also stated that actual package costs differ from expected package costs:

The distribution of the cost of support packages differs from expected across all trial sites. In particular, a higher proportion of low cost participants were expected compared with actual experience, and there are a higher proportion of participants receiving mid-range packages than expected.¹⁹

Trial sites commenced 1 July 2014

2.41 This section presents an overview of each of three trial sites—ACT, Western Australia and the Barkley—that all commenced operations on 1 July 2014.

The ACT trial site

2.42 The committee held public hearings at Parliament House in Canberra on 27 March 2015. The committee took evidence from 17 participants and carers and 11 individuals representing service providers. In the afternoon, the committee heard from the ACT Government's Disability ACT and ACT NDIA officials. After the main hearing the committee held an Advocacy roundtable taking evidence from nine organisations.

2.43 The ACT will be the first jurisdiction as a whole to roll out the NDIS. Other jurisdictions are entering by designated areas and/or selected categories. For the ACT this transition will involve approximately 5000 people.

Transition arrangements

2.44 People with disability in the ACT will gradually transition to the Scheme over a two year period. Table 2.5 on the following page provides a schematic of the transition arrangements for the ACT trial site. The intake for the trial site was agreed to be in 'ages and stages', which involves transitioning clients by 'specific age cohorts determined by date of birth or by academic year for children and young people of school age concurrently'.²⁰

18 National Disability Insurance Agency, *Quarterly Report to COAG Disability Reform Council*, 30 June 2015, p. 23.

19 National Disability Insurance Agency, *Quarterly Report to COAG Disability Reform Council*, 31 March 2015, p. 24.

20 Bilateral Agreement for NDIS Launch between the Commonwealth and Australian Capital Territory, Appendix C, p. 10.

Table 2.5: Transition arrangements in the ACT trial site for 2014-15

	1 st Quarter	2 nd Quarter	3 rd Quarter	4 th Quarter
Age Based Those born:	1 July 1949 to 30 June 1950	1 July 1950 to 30 June 1951	1 July 1951 to 30 June 1954	1 July 1954 to 30 June 1955
School Aged and Infants Those born:	1 July 2012 to 30 June 2014 and 2008–2014 School Leavers	1 July 2010 to 30 June 2012, School Leavers, and any children not expected to commence school in 2015–16	School years: 7 to 12	School years: Kindergarten to 6
Group Home Accommodation Youngest resident born:	1 July 1992 or later	23 August 1989 to 30 June 1992	24 October 1983 to 22 August 1989	29 October 1981 to 23 October 1983

Source: Bilateral Agreement between the Commonwealth and Australian Capital Territory, Appendix C, p. 12.

2.45 The intakes for 2015-16 and 2016-17 follow a similar progressive pattern to transition all eligible people into the scheme. All participants are scheduled to transition into the scheme by the end of the first quarter of 2016-17.²¹

2.46 The committee is aware of the opportunities, benefits and challenges of a geographically and demographically smaller trial site and of transitioning an entire jurisdiction into the scheme during the trial period.

Table 2.6: Key statistics of the new trial sites (after 1 year)

	ACT	Barkly (NT)	Perth Hills	MyWay (WA)
Average annualised committed cost of individual packages (\$)	45,361	50,327	34,894	26,014
Number of participants in bilateral agreement, 30 June 2015	1,537	103	1,642	1,404
Number of participants with approved plans, 30 June 2015	1,427	61	1,199	688
Access requests	2,314	79	1,576	n/a
Accepted as eligible	2,037	68	1,396	777
Ineligible	143	6	106	n/a
Other	134	5	74	n/a
Average days from access request to plan approval in 2014-15	58	36	31	53
Review of decisions (internal)	31	0	11	0
Appeals to the Administrative Appeal Tribunal (AAT)	2	0	2	n/a
Participants accessing mainstream services (% of total)	87	82	66	n/a

Source: National Disability Insurance Agency, *Quarterly Report to COAG Disability Reform Council*, 30 June 2015, pp 28, 40, 41, 49 and 55. WA Disability Services Commission, *Quarterly Report to the Commonwealth Government*, 30 June 2015, pp 6 and 23.

21 Bilateral Agreement for NDIS Launch between the Commonwealth and Australian Capital Territory, Appendix C, p. 13.

Transition progress in the ACT trial site²²

2.47 As of 30 June 2015, 1427 people have approved individualised support plans. The NDIA report that the average package cost is \$45 361. Of these plans 48 per cent are managed by the NDIA, 41 per cent are managed as a combination between the Agency and the individual or services provider(s), and importantly, 11 per cent are entirely self-managed. The total cost of committed supports for participants to 30 June 2015 at the ACT trial site was \$64 670 395.

2.48 There are 169 registered service providers in the ACT providing a range of services that can be accessed through the NDIA's 'Find registered service providers' web portal.²³

The Western Australian trial sites

2.49 Western Australia is conducting two trials to assess the NDIS and MyWay models in providing disability support—both commenced on 1 July 2014.

2.50 The NDIS trial site, located in the Perth Hills area, is managed by the NDIA. It encompasses the Swan, Kalamunda and Mundaring local government areas.

2.51 While the WA NDIS MyWay trial site is managed by the WA Disability Services Commission (DSC) and is located in the Lower South West area. The Cockburn and Kwinana trial site joined the My Way trial on 1 July 2015.

2.52 The committee held a public hearing in Busselton on 8 April 2015. The committee took evidence from 12 participants and carers and 16 individuals representing service providers in Busselton.

2.53 On 9 April 2015, the committee held a public hearing in the Perth Hills taking evidence from 7 participants and carers and 13 individuals representing service providers.

Transition arrangements

2.54 This section provides brief details of the My Way transition arrangements.

Table 2.7: WA NDIS My Way estimated participant population²⁴

Year	2014-15	2015-16
Estimated Lower South West participant population	1,404	1,418
Estimated Cockburn/Kwinana participant population	0	2,715
Estimated total participant population	1,404	4,133

22 National Disability Insurance Agency, *Quarterly Report to COAG Disability Reform Council*, 30 June 2015, pp 28, 40, 41, 49 and 55.

23 National Disability Insurance Agency, <http://www.ndis.gov.au/document/finding-and-engaging-providers/find-registered-service-providers>, (accessed 9 November 2015).

24 National Partnership Agreement on trial of My Way sites, *An agreement between the Commonwealth of Australia and Western Australia*, March 2014, p. 12.

2.55 The WA NDIS MyWay trial is governed by the National Partnership Agreement on trial of My Way sites, an agreement between the Commonwealth and Western Australian Governments. Table 2.7 above shows the estimated participant population covered by the two initial NDIS MyWay trial sites once both are up and running.

Table 2.8: Key statistics of the new trial sites (after 1 year)

	ACT	Barkly (NT)	Perth Hills	MyWay ²⁵ (WA)
Average annualised committed cost of individual packages (\$)	45,361	50,327	34,894	26,014
Number of participants in bilateral agreement, 30 June 2015	1,537	103	1,642	1,404
Number of participants with approved plans, 30 June 2015	1,427	61	1,199	688
Access requests	2,314	79	1,576	n/a
Accepted as eligible	2,037	68	1,396	777
Ineligible	143	6	106	n/a
Other	134	5	74	n/a
Average days from access request to plan approval in 2014-15	58	36	31	64
Review of decisions (internal)	31	0	11	0
Appeals to the Administrative Appeal Tribunal (AAT)	2	0	2	n/a
Participants accessing mainstream services (% of total)	87	82	66	n/a

Source: National Disability Insurance Agency, *Quarterly Report to COAG Disability Reform Council*, 30 June 2015, and WA Disability Services Commission, *Quarterly Report to the Commonwealth Government*, 30 June 2015.

Transition progress in the WA trial sites²⁶

2.56 An independent evaluation of both WA trial site models will take place through the trial period. The evaluation will be overseen by the joint steering committee managed out of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and will provide an interim report in October 2015 and a final report in August 2016.²⁷

2.57 The committee acknowledges that it is difficult to compare the two WA sites and as such no direct comparison will be undertaken in this report other than reporting the two sites key statistics and transition rates.

2.58 The Perth Hills trial site covers a smaller geographic area, is metropolitan, and has a larger number of participants than the WA NDIS My Way trial site. The Lower South West My Way trial site is building on an existing system of local area coordinators, which in effect is a 'business as usual' arrangement that links in with a state run system that has been in operation for over twenty years.

25 National Partnership Agreement on trial of My Way sites, *Schedule C: Participant Intake*, May 2014, pp 1-2. The figures vary from the National Partnership Agreement signed in March 2014 to reflect the numbers of additional people found to be eligible for DSC funded support.

26 National Disability Insurance Agency, *Quarterly Report to COAG Disability Reform Council*, 30 June 2015.

27 WA DSC, WA independent evaluation, <http://www.disability.wa.gov.au/wa-ndis-my-way/wa-ndis-my-way/the-trial/wa-independent-evaluation/> (accessed 18 June 2015).

2.59 As of 30 June 2015, the Perth Hills site had approved 1199 people for an individualised support plan. The average package cost in the Perth Hills trial site is \$34 894.

2.60 Of these plans, 60 per cent are managed by the NDIA, 31 per cent are managed as a combination between the Agency and the individual or services provider(s), and 9 per cent are entirely self-managed.

2.61 The NDIA quarterly report does not provide a breakdown of the number of service providers registered by state and territory so no details can be provided.

2.62 The total cost of committed supports for participants to 30 June 2015 at NDIA Perth Hills trial site was \$41 220 779.

Table 2.9: 2014-15 My Way participation figures and associated data

WA NDIS My Way trial	Total
Total committed plan costs	\$17.9 million
Total number of individuals eligible for support	777
Total number of individuals with current plans (funded and no funding requested)	688
Total number of current plans (with funding)	643
Total number of current plans (with no funding requested)	45
Total year to date payments for the period	\$14 million
Average costs for total current plans (funded and no funding requested)	\$26,014
Average costs for current plans (with funding)	\$27,834
Number of service providers operating in the trial site	36

Source: WA Disability Services Commission, *Quarterly Report to the Commonwealth Government*, 30 June 2015, p. 6.

2.63 The average length of time for a plan to be approved has been 64 days with an average package cost of \$26 014 for (643 funded and 45 no funding requested).

2.64 It was expected that DSC clients would phase into NDIS My Way from 1 July 2014 in the Lower South West trial site. According to the latest DSC My Way quarterly report, a total of 688 individuals have now received plans. Of these, 374 have requested access since the scheme began, the rest were transferred directly into the scheme on 1 July 2014. Other participants will be phased in on a quarterly basis as outlined in Table 2.7.

2.65 Of these plans, 29 per cent are managed by a service provider, 36 per cent are managed by a combination of the DSC and the individual or services provider(s), and 35 per cent are entirely self-managed.

2.66 There are 36 registered service providers registered in the My Way trial site; 72 per cent of registered providers in the trial site are operating in the state only, with 28 per cent having a national presence. The total cost of NDIS funded supports to 30 June 2015 was \$17.9 million.

2.67 Table 2.9 shows among other key findings that the actual numbers are below the anticipated National Partnership Agreement participant numbers.

2.68 At the end of the fourth quarter the 688 participant numbers in the WA NDIS My Way trial are considerably lower than the expected at 1404—see Table 2.8 for expected bilateral numbers.

2.69 While noting that the forecasts were in their very early stages, Mr Greenway, one of the representatives from the WA NDIS My Way Scheme Actuary TaylorFry, told the committee in June that:

We will be revisiting the forecasts soon...We are also undertaking some in-depth analysis to look into why the numbers of participants are lower than were expected.²⁸

2.70 Mr Greenway had previously provided greater detail to the above comments in the WA NDIS My Way fourth quarterly report:

As at 30 June 2015, there are 35% fewer individuals in the trial than expected. The disparity with expectations is due partly to the slow emergence of individuals with psychosocial disability and individuals that qualify for early intervention. We anticipate that participation will move closer to expectations with the continued emergence of these individuals, but we do not anticipate that the ultimate number of individuals will reach initial expectations for the Lower South West.²⁹

2.71 However, Mr Greenway did state to the committee that:

Using the forecasts as a basis for sustainability, if the forecasts are what was expected and if that is the level of sustainability that you need, then certainly this trial is on track in terms of sustainability.³⁰

2.72 A lower than expected figure is also a feature of the NDIA run Perth Hills trial site where transition numbers against the agreed bilateral numbers are also low at approximately 73 per cent completion.

2.73 The committee notes the experiences of participants and providers at both trial sites, and the long history of the My Way model which effectively began in 1988. At its hearings in WA, the committee heard many positive stories of how both trials were striving and succeeding in changing people's lives.

The Barkly trial site

2.74 Members of the committee visited the Barkly trial site headquarters at Tennant Creek on 20 July 2015 and met with 11 local participants, carers and the staff of the NDIA office, more detail is at paragraph 2.19. The committee held a public hearing in Darwin on 21 July 2015, where it took evidence from 10 individuals representing service providers in the Northern Territory.

28 Mr Alan Greenfield, *Committee Hansard*, 5 June 2015, p. 9.

29 Disability Services Commission, *Quarterly Report to the Commonwealth Government*, 1 April 2015 to 30 June 2015 (fourth quarterly report), data extracted on 30 June 2015, p. 5.

30 Mr Alan Greenfield, *Committee Hansard*, 5 June 2015, p. 9.

2.75 The Barkly trial site encompasses the Barkly Regional Council local government area of the Northern Territory. It is the largest trial site covering approximately 323 514 km—the region is very sparsely populated.² The estimated population of Barkly is 8056, which includes a population of 3,560 in Tennant Creek—the largest concentration of residents. This equates to two people per 100 square kilometres.³¹

Transition arrangements

2.76 Residents under the age of 65 years with permanent and significant disability who meet the access requirements are gradually entering the Scheme which commenced from 1 July 2014. Existing service users and new participants will enter the Scheme progressively on a community by community basis as NDIA staff visit towns and remote communities. The Barkly NDIA office is located in Tennant Creek.

Table 2.10: Key statistics of the new trial sites (after 1 year)

	ACT	Barkly (NT)	Perth Hills	MyWay (WA)
Average annualised committed cost of individual packages (\$)	45,361	50,327	34,894	26,014
Number of participants in bilateral agreement, 30 June 2015	1,537	103	1,642	1,404
Number of participants with approved plans, 30 June 2015	1,427	61	1,199	688
Access requests	2,314	79	1,576	n/a
Accepted as eligible	2,037	68	1,396	777
Ineligible	143	6	106	n/a
Other	134	5	74	n/a
Average days from access request to plan approval in 2014-15	58	36	31	53
Review of decisions (internal)	31	0	11	0
Appeals to the Administrative Appeal Tribunal (AAT)	2	0	2	n/a
Participants accessing mainstream services (% of total)	87	82	66	n/a

Source: National Disability Insurance Agency, *Quarterly Report to COAG Disability Reform Council*, 30 June 2015, and the WA Disability Services Commission, *Quarterly Report to the Commonwealth Government*, 30 June 2015,

2.77 The bilateral agreement notes that the order in which specific communities will be assisted and the timing of assistance to Tennant Creek participants will be settled in discussions between the NT Government and the NDIA. Table 2.11 shows the bilateral agreement estimates of participant population covered by the Barkly trial site. Table 2.12 shows the estimated total cost of NDIS funded supports in line with the agreed participation population as shown in Table 2.11.

2.78 The bilateral planned intake of participants states that:

- (b) by 30 September 2014 current disability and mental health clients receiving NT or Commonwealth services will be assisted to access the Scheme on a community by community basis; and
- (c) new clients not currently receiving services will be assisted to access the Scheme as their community phases in.³²

31 Barkly Regional Council, <http://barkly.nt.gov.au/region/demographics> (accessed 18 June 2015).

32 Northern Territory bilateral agreement, Appendix B, p. 12.

2.79 All participants are scheduled to transition into the scheme by July 2019.

Table 2.11 Northern Territory NDIS bilateral agreement participant numbers

Year:	2014-15	2015-16
Estimated Northern Territory participant population	103	104

Table 2.12 Cost of Northern Territory NDIS supports

Year:	2014-15	2015-16
Estimated total cost of NDIS funded supports	\$3.3 million	\$4.0 million

Transition progress in the Barkly trial site³³

2.80 As of 30 June 2015, 61 people in the NT have approved individualised support plans. The average package cost in the Barkly trial site is \$50 327.

2.81 Of these plans, 93 per cent are managed by the NDIA, the remainder are managed in a combination of both the agency and the participant. No plans are self-managed.

2.82 The NDIA quarterly report does not provide a breakdown of the number of service providers registered by state and territory so no details can be provided.

2.83 The total cost of committed supports for participants to 30 June 2015 at the Barkly trial site was \$3 061 377.

Challenges in the Barkly trial site

2.84 As outlined earlier, it is anticipated that the Barkly trial will provide valuable experience and understanding in delivering the NDIS in remote areas, which will inform the roll-out across the rest of the NT and other remote parts of Australia. Apart from dealing with the direct challenge of the high rate of disability among Indigenous Australians compared to the general Australian population, the implementation of the Barkly trial presents a number of specific challenges:

- low numbers of Indigenous Australians with disability accessing the disability service system—a contributing factor is the reluctance of Indigenous people with disability to identify as a person with disability. This presents a significant barrier to the successful implementation of the NDIS in this region;
- experience of Indigenous Australians when using services—a lack of confidence in dealing with, and a mistrust of, government agencies and service providers;

33 National Disability Insurance Agency, *Quarterly Report to COAG Disability Reform Council*, 30 June 2015, pp 28, 40, 41, 49 and 55.

- differences in cultural backgrounds and understanding between service providers and Indigenous Australians—this can form an impediment to effective delivery of support services; and
- access to services—lack of available and appropriate services due to the remote location.

2.85 The fundamental principle of the NDIS is individual choice and control. Enabling Indigenous Australians to exercise such choice and control may be difficult where the absence of service providers in remote areas precludes meaningful choice.

2.86 The evidence that the committee heard in Darwin regarding the Barkly trial confirms the incredible difficulty in delivering high quality services to regional and remote areas of Australia and as such represents one of the biggest challenges to the Scheme.

Committee view

2.87 This chapter has outlined the progress of the trial sites in 2014-15. Issues raised in the trial site hearings will be discussed in later chapters. This includes issues for participants, providers and market development and assistance which were raised during hearings in multiple trial sites.

2.88 The committee thanks all who have contributed to the committee's work. The committee appreciates the time and effort that people have put in to making submissions and giving evidence at public hearings.

2.89 The committee acknowledges the importance of trial sites in showing where the Scheme works well and how it could be improved. The committee notes that the trial sites are not all identical and have varying issues that are impacted by factors including the geographic and demographic size of the trial site, the cohort in transition and the length of the trial period so far.

2.90 The committee continues to find trial site visits an informative and valuable undertaking. Accordingly, the committee intends to conduct further visits to both the existing and new trial sites in the coming year noting that the full roll out of the Scheme will commence in mid-2016.