

Q4

2020-2021



NDIS Quarterly Report to disability ministers

30 June 2021

ndis

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1. Improved engagement with stakeholders will be a key feature of the NDIA's future approach.

1.1 The NDIA is committed to improved engagement with people with lived disability experience to develop a new person-centred model for assessments, which are required under the NDIS Act.

On 9 July 2021, the Minister for the NDIA, Linda Reynolds CSC, met with state and territory disability ministers. The Ministers agreed Independent Assessments would not proceed, and that they would work in partnership with those with lived experience of disability through the Independent Advisory Council (IAC) and disability representatives, on the co-design of a new person-centred model that delivers consistency and equity in access and planning outcomes, consistent with the legislative requirements for assessments as set out under the National Disability Insurance Scheme 2013 Act.

The Agency supports this decision, and is determined to undertake improved engagement with people with disability, the sector and state and territory governments, to develop a new person-centred model for assessments. We remain committed to delivering an NDIS that delivers true choice and control of reasonable and necessary supports in a way that is fair, consistent and equitable for all participants, regardless of their geography or socio-demographic circumstances.

1.2 In addition, the NDIA will engage broadly with stakeholders to build a better understanding of the financial challenges facing the Scheme.

Understanding and tackling Scheme affordability, in partnership with the disability community, will continue to be at the forefront of our collective work. We all have a responsibility to make sure that the Scheme remains affordable over the long-term so that the NDIS is available for current and new participants well into the future.

1.3 The NDIA will build on the valuable work undertaken recently by the IAC and disability representatives on strengthening Scheme reforms to access and planning.

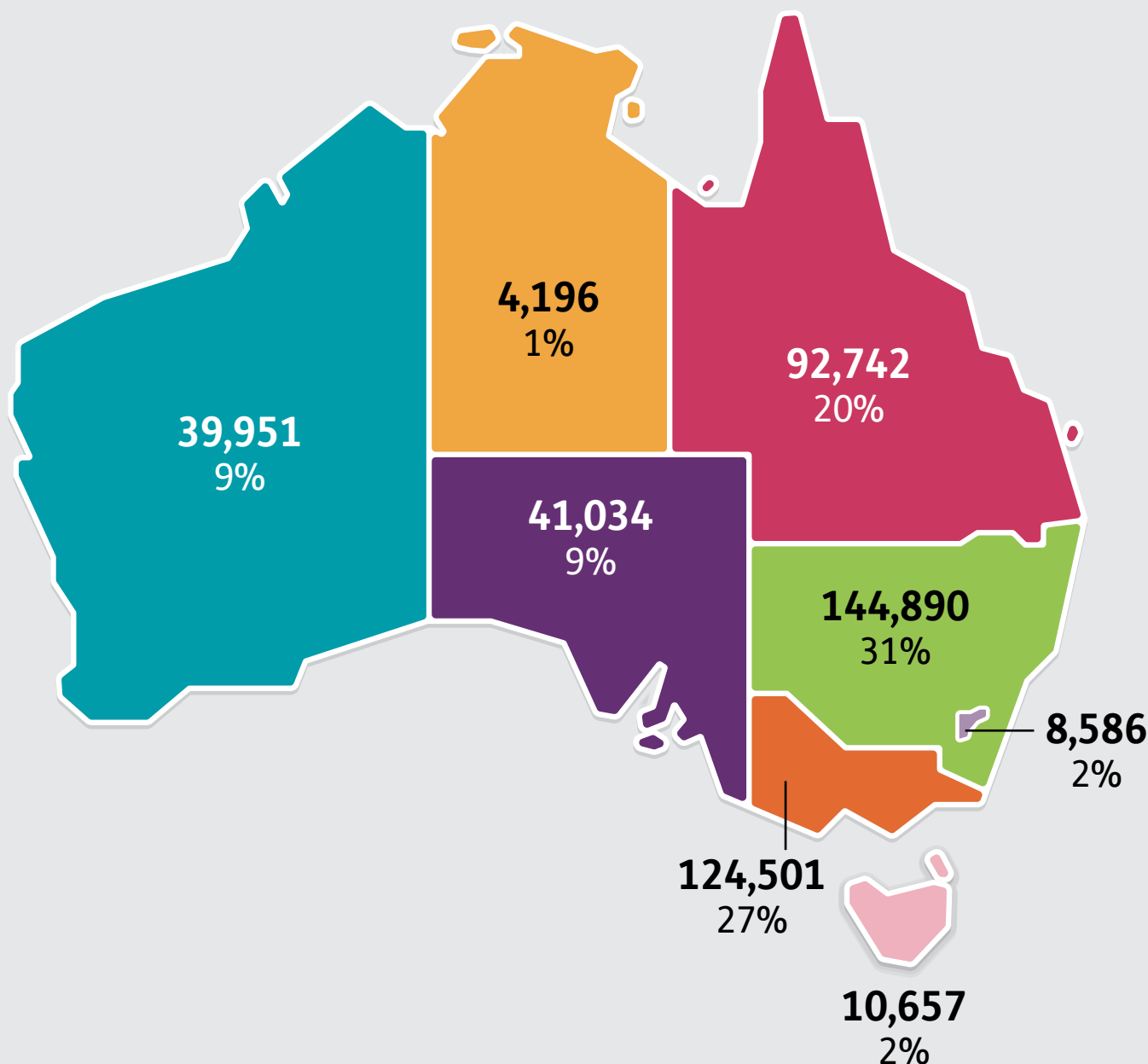
This includes continuing to improve the consistency and equity of decision-making within the Scheme to ensure the NDIS is delivering better and fairer outcomes for all participants. The NDIA Board would like to thank the IAC for their advice and valued contribution to improving the Scheme.

1.4 In addition, the NDIA will continue to implement the Participant Service Guarantee (PSG), and further strengthen fraud and integrity measures.

A communique detailing the outcomes of the 9 July 2021 Disability Reform Ministers Meeting (DRMM) has been published on the [Disability Reform Council webpage](#). See sections 3.1 and 3.2 for further information on the PSG.

2. The improved engagement will build on the positive outcomes so far achieved for participants since the Scheme was launched eight years ago

2.1 As at 30 June 2021, there are 466,619 participants across Australia in the Scheme, including 245,274 receiving supports for the first time:

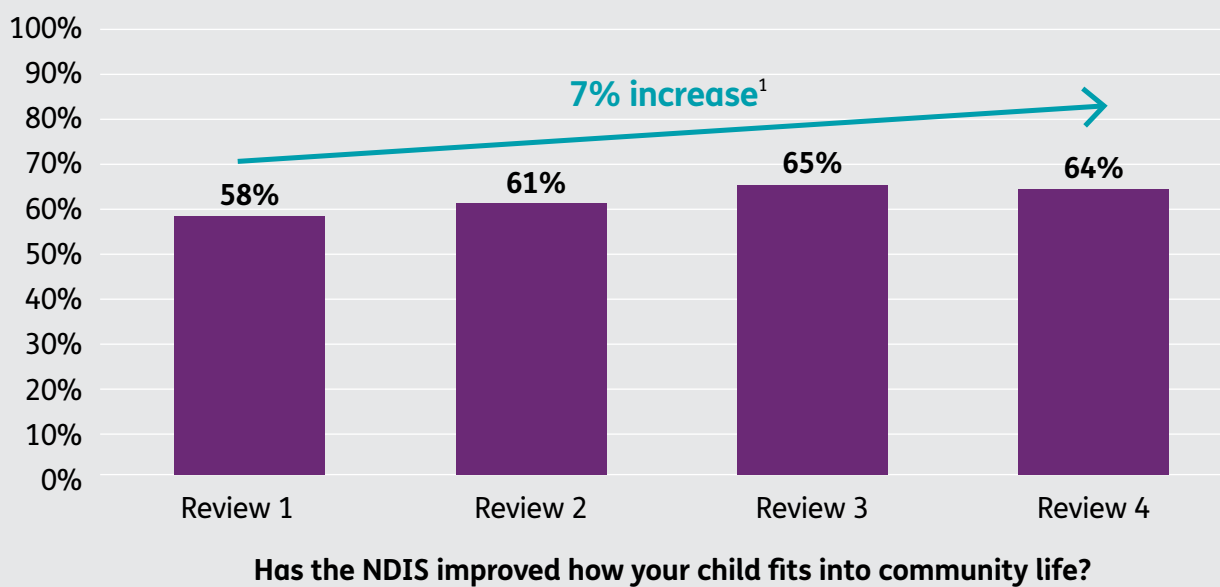


The NDIS has been in operation for eight years, with the first three years being the trial period, followed by a transition phase, with the Scheme being operational in all areas of Australia on 1 July 2020. At 30 June 2016, the Scheme included 30,000 participants. The Scheme then grew significantly, with the number of participants increasing by more than ten-fold to 390,000 participants at 30 June 2020 (four years later), and now includes 467,000 participants at 30 June 2021.

2.2 The NDIS is making a real difference in the lives of participants and their families/ carers in many aspects of daily life:

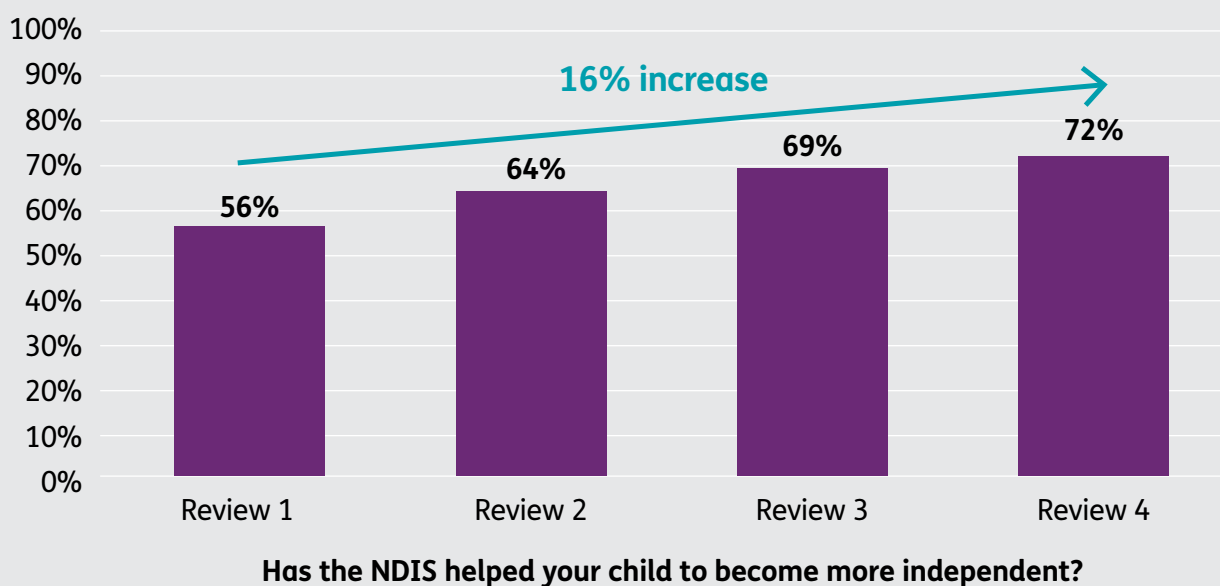
- a. For children aged 0 to starting school, the percentage of parents and caregivers reporting that the NDIS has improved their child's ability to fit into community life has increased by seven percentage points from 58% to 64%.

Figure 1: For children aged 0 to before starting school



- b. For children starting school to 14 years, the percentage of parents and caregivers reporting that the NDIS has helped their child become more independent has increased by 16 percentage points from 56% to 72%.

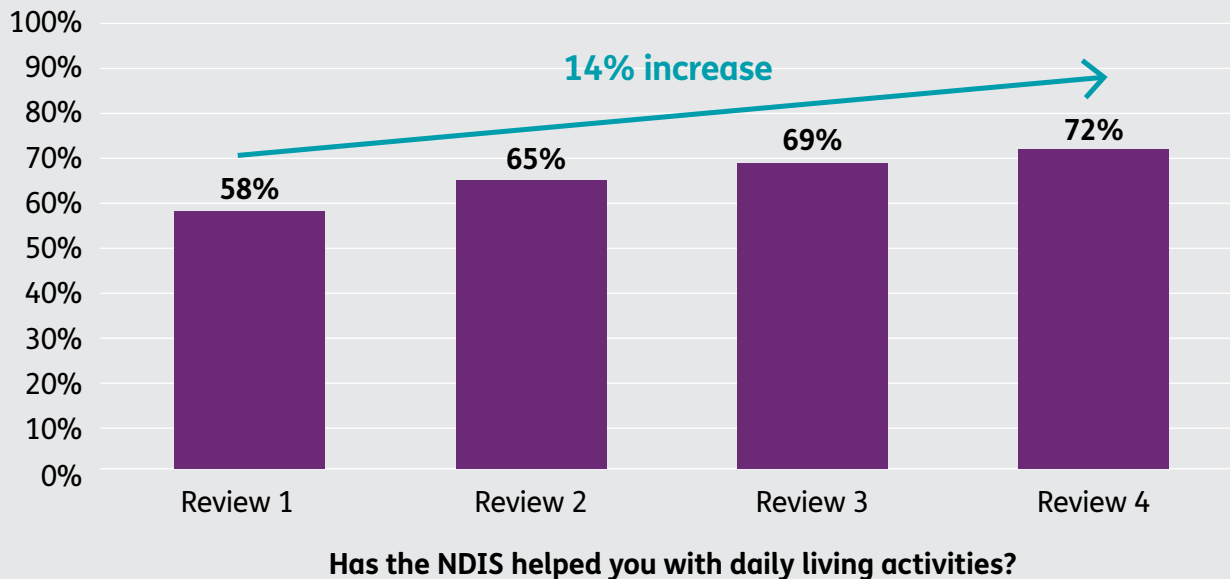
Figure 2: For children starting school to 14 years



¹ The Review 1 result was 57.6% and the Review 4 result was 64.4%, an increase of 6.8%.

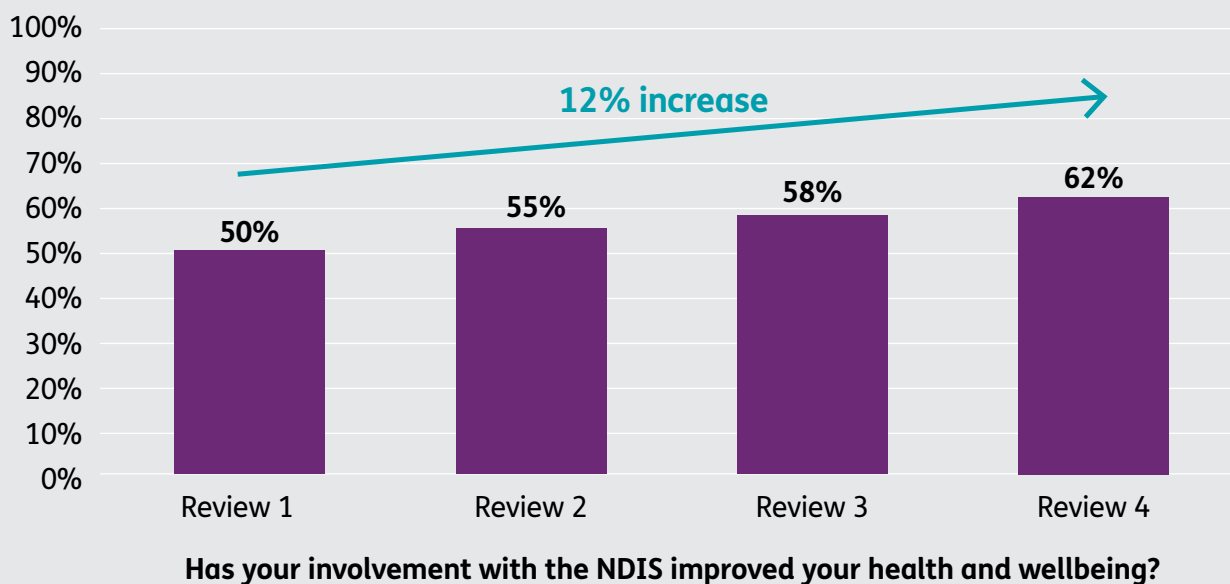
- c. For young adults aged 15 to 24, the percentage of participants reporting that the NDIS has helped with their daily living activities has increased by 14 percentage points from 58% to 72%.

Figure 3: For young adults aged 15 to 24



- d. For adults aged 25 and over, the percentage of participants reporting that the NDIS has helped improve their health and wellbeing has increased by 12 percentage points from 50% to 62%.

Figure 4: For adults 25 and over



2.3 The NDIS has helped to increase social participation:

a. For those who have been in the Scheme for at least two years the rate of social participation for participants aged over 15 years has increased by nine percentage points (from 36% to 45%).

– **nine** percentage increase from **34%** to **43%** for participants aged 15–24 years

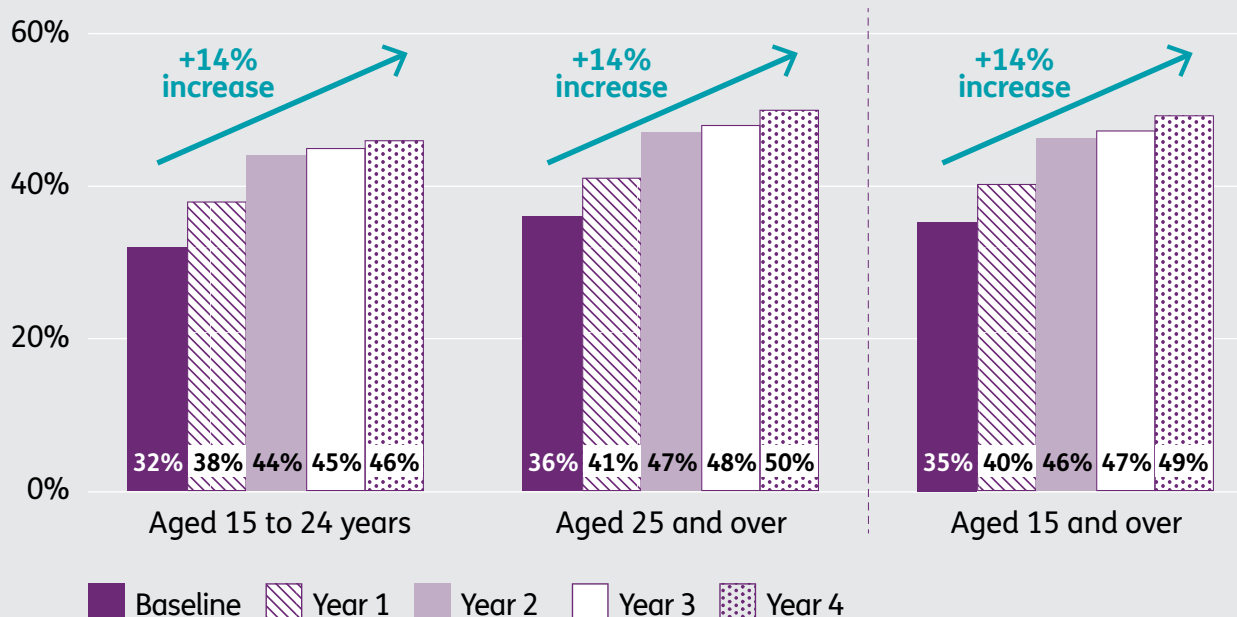
– **eight** percentage increase from **37%** to **45%** for participants aged 25+ years

– **nine** percentage increase from **36%** to **45%** for participants aged 15+ years

b. Further, for those who have been in the Scheme for four years, the rates have increased from 32% to 46% for participants aged 15-24 years (an increase of 14 percentage points) and from 36 to 50 per cent for participant aged 25+ years (an increase of 14 per cent). For all participants aged 15 and over, the rate has increased by 14%, from 35% to 49% overall.

Figure 5: Participants involved in Community and Social Activities

Participants in the Scheme 4+ years²

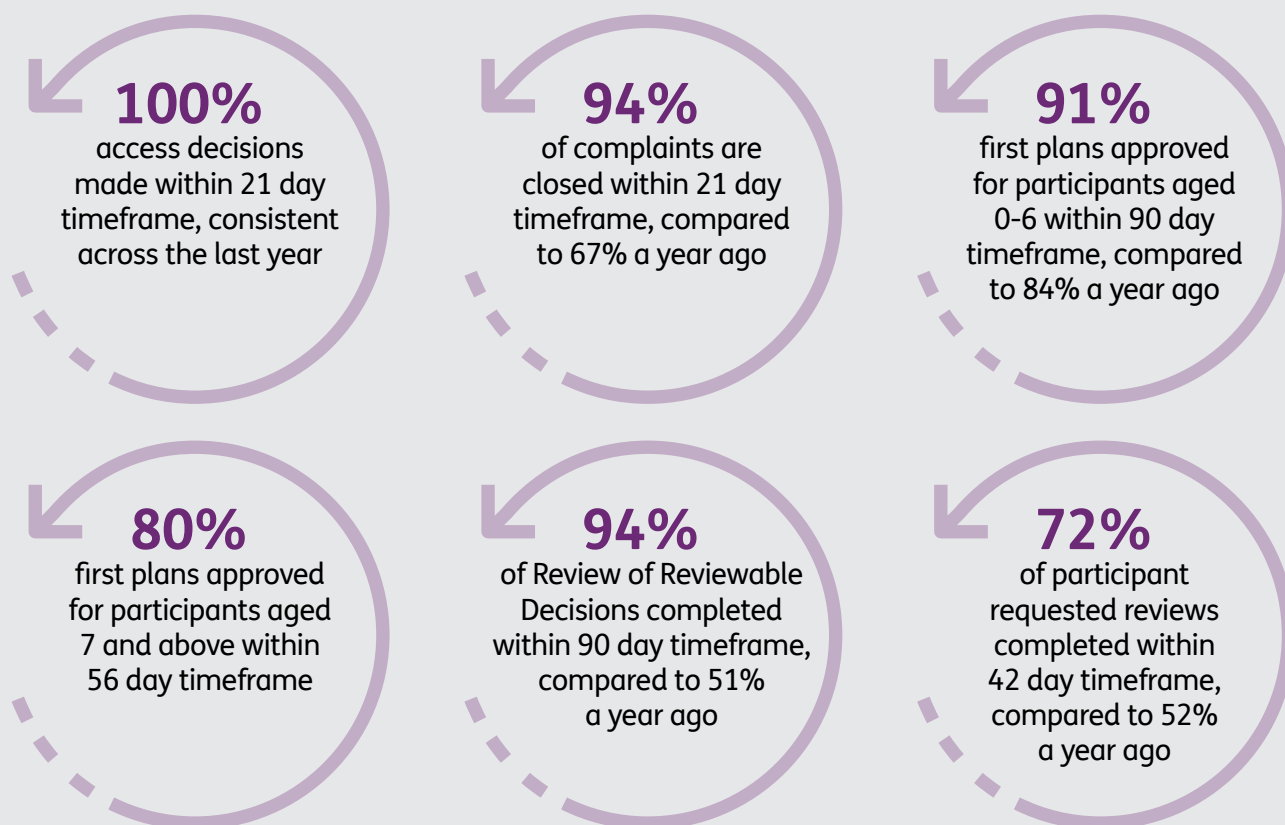


² Participants entering between 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017

2.4 The Agency has implemented the Participant Service Guarantee early, resulting in reduced time to make decisions. Specifically:

- **100%** of access decisions have been made within the 21 days
- **91%** of first plans were approved within 90 days for 0-6 year olds, and **79%** of first plans were approved within 90 days for 7+ year olds
- **94%** of complaints were closed within the 21 day timeframe, compared to 67% a year ago
- **94%** of Review of Reviewable Decisions were completed within the 90 day timeframe, compared to 51% a year ago

It is acknowledged that there is more work to do on the first plan approval timeframes for those aged 7 and above, and participant requested review timeframes.

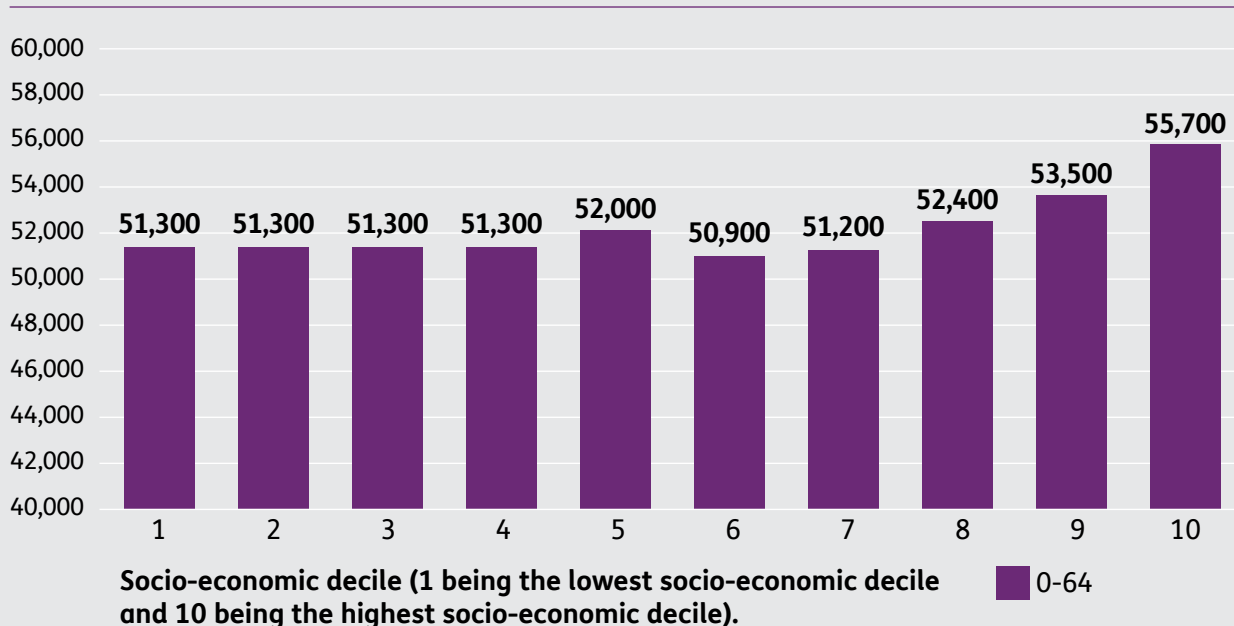


3. The NDIA will work with the sector to address significant challenges facing the Scheme

3.1 Access and planning decisions are inconsistent, reflecting the quality of information collected from participants. Plan budgets are higher for participants in high socio-economic areas compared to participants in lower socio-economic areas.

The average annualised plan budgets for participants in the lowest socio-economic decile is \$51,300, compared to \$55,700 for participants in the highest socio-economic decile, a difference of 9 per cent.

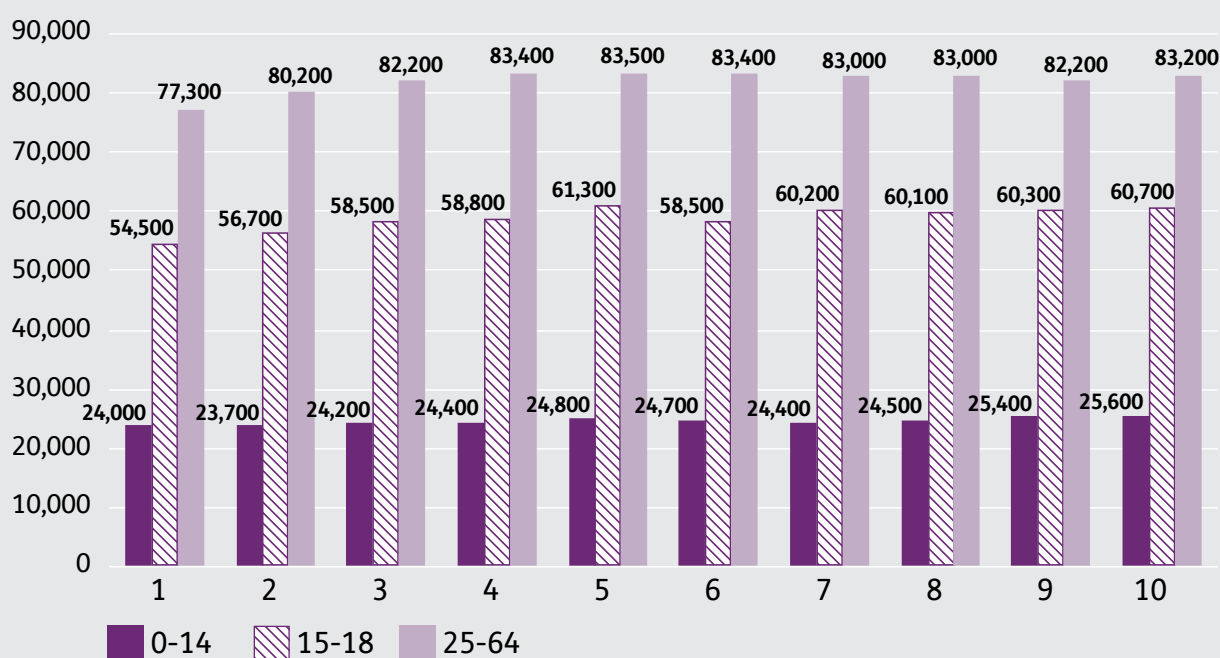
Figure 6: Average annualised committed supports by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Index of Education and Occupation (IEO) deciles – non SIL, age 0-64 – as at 30 June 2021 (\$)



As shown in Figure 7, the trend is consistent across age groups (for non-SIL participants):

- For participants aged 0-14, the average annualised plan budget for participants in the lowest socio-economic decile is \$24,000 compared to \$25,600 for participants in the highest socio-economic decile, a difference of 10%.
- For participants aged 15-18, the average annualised plan budget for participants in the lowest socio-economic decile is \$54,500, compared to \$60,700 compared to participants in the highest socio-economic decile, a difference of 11%.
- For participants aged 25-64, the average annualised plan budget for participants in the lowest socio-economic decile is \$77,300, compared to \$83,200 compared to participants in the highest socio-economic decile, a difference of 8%.

Figure 7: Average annualised plan budgets by the ABS Index of Education and Occupation (IEO) deciles, non-SIL participants by age groups (\$)

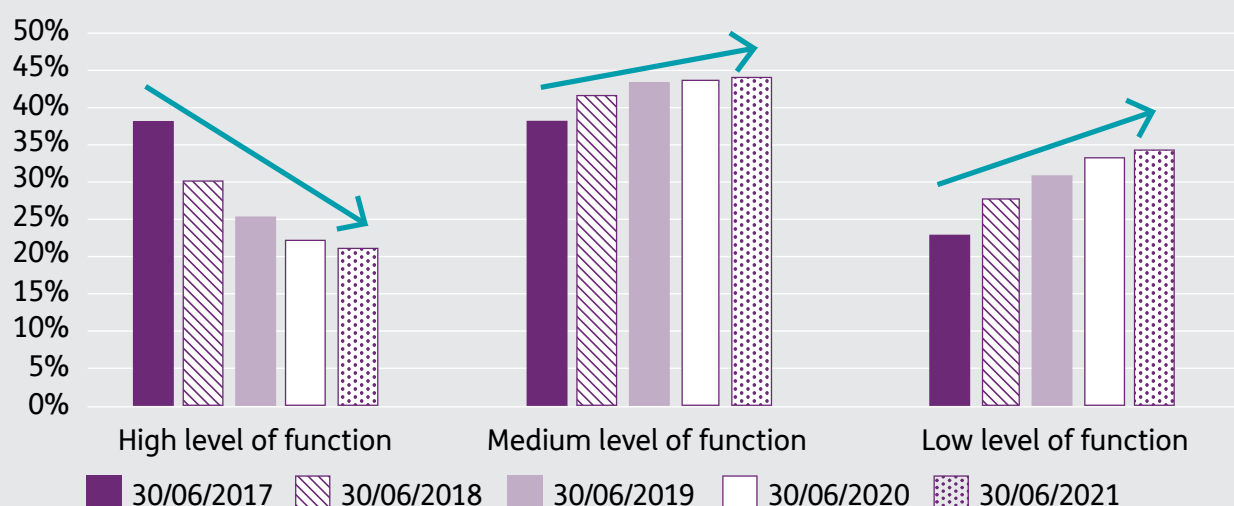


3.2 The change in the level of reported functional impairment over a relatively short period of time is unexpected, reflecting inconsistent information

For participants who were in the scheme on 30 June 2017, there has been a reported decline in functional capacity. 38 per cent of these participants had a high level of function on 30 June 2017, compared to 21 per cent on 30 June 2021. Conversely, participants with a low level of function have increased over the same period, from 23 per cent to 35 per cent. While not ascribing a causal relationship, such a change results in a higher level of supports. This appears to be inconsistent with the intent of the Scheme, where investment should lead to increased independence, and functional capacity improving.

More detail on the changing level of function by different participant groups, different entry years, and by State/Territory is included in Addendum 1 to this report.

Figure 8: Change in reported functional distribution from 30 June 2017 to 30 June 2021^{3,4}



³ This chart is based on active participants at 30 June 2017 only. Those who entered after 30 June 2017 are excluded.

⁴ The distributions are calculated excluding participants with a missing level of function.

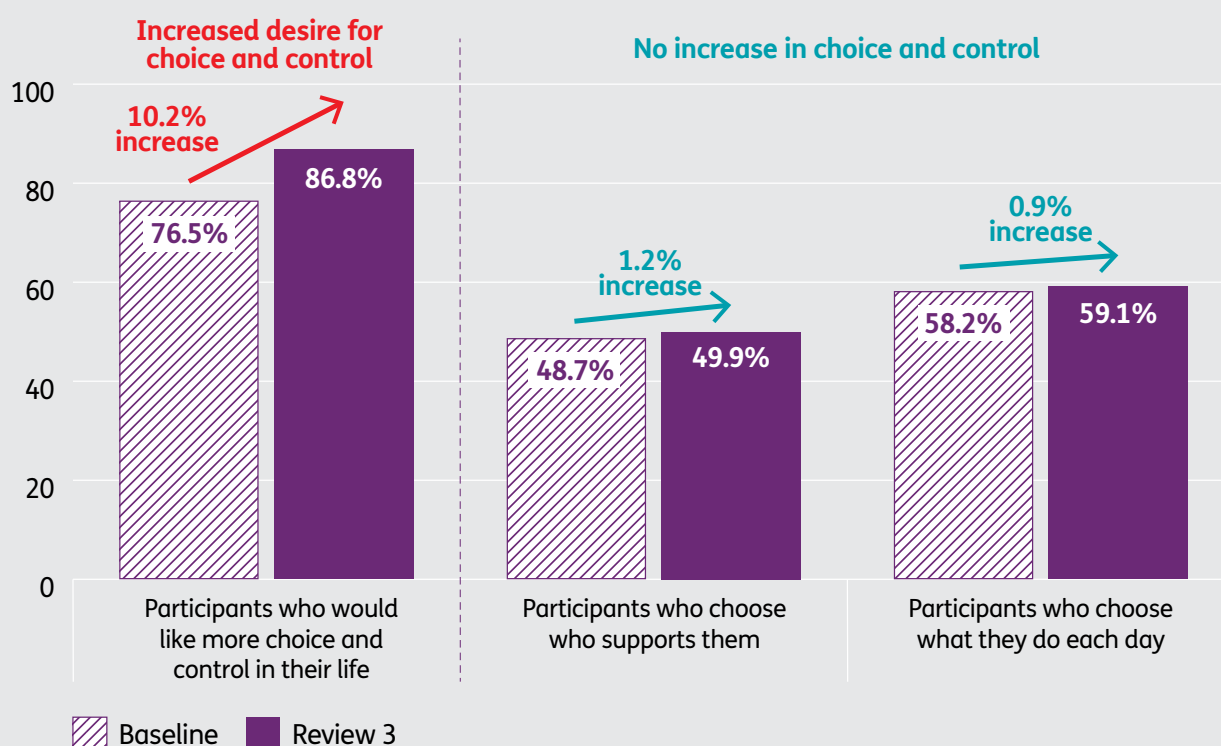
3.3 The current planning process limits a participants' ability to exercise choice and control over how to use their support package

Participants who would like more choice and control have increased from 77 per cent to 87 per cent, a 10 per cent increase.

Participants who decide who supports them and participants who choose what they do each day have remained relatively stable.

This inconsistency between a participants' dream for greater choice and control, and their inability to obtain it is imbedded in the design of the Scheme, and should be addressed.

Figure 9: Choice and Control indicators for participants over 15 years old, and over three reviews

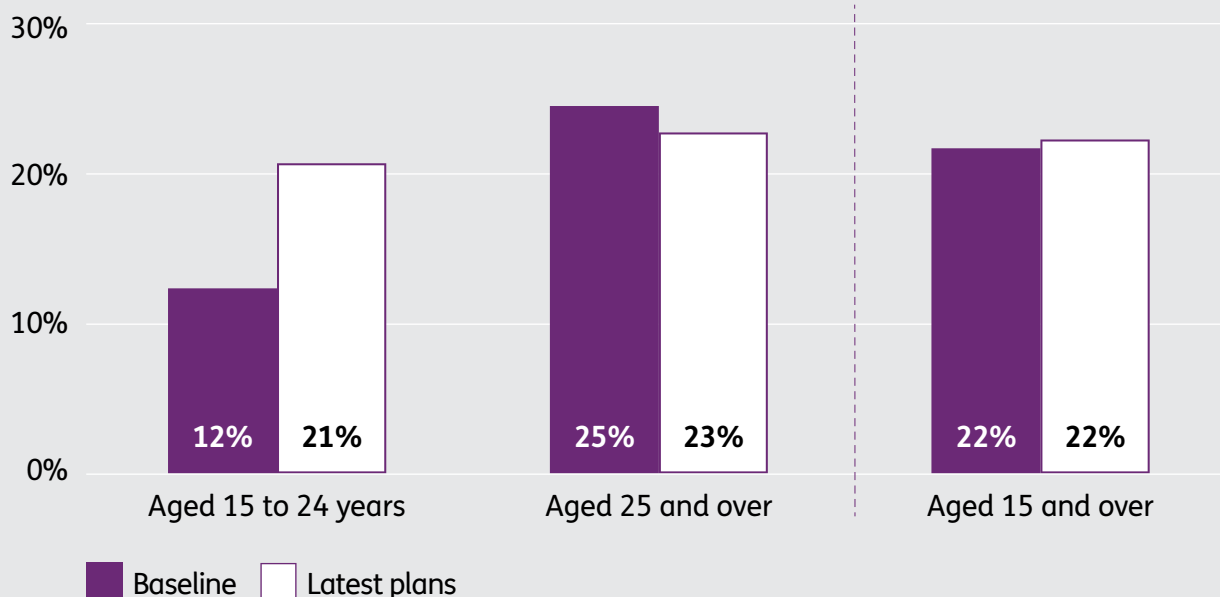


3.4 Rates of employment have not increased significantly for participants.

a. Rates of employment for those who have been in the Scheme for at least two years have not increased significantly, except for those aged 15 to 24 years.

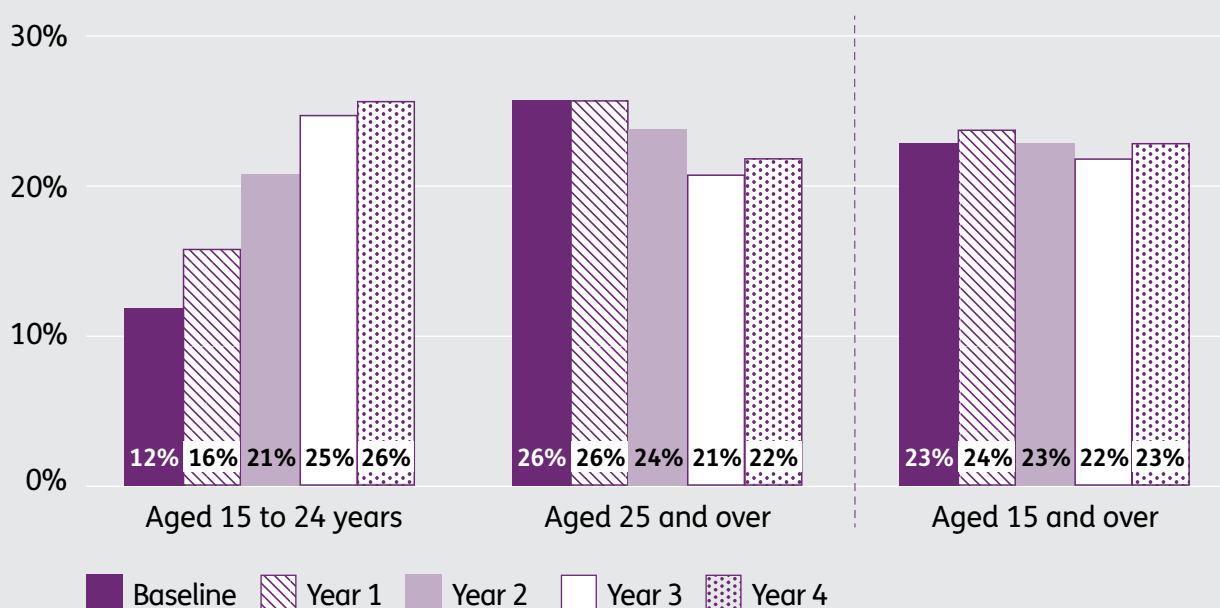
Figure 10: Participants with a paid job

Participants in the Scheme 2+ years⁵



b. Further, for participants who have been in the Scheme for four years, rates have remained the same for participants aged 15+ years at 23 per cent, despite significant increases for participants aged 15 to 24..

Participants in the Scheme 4+ years⁶



⁵ Participants entering between 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2019.

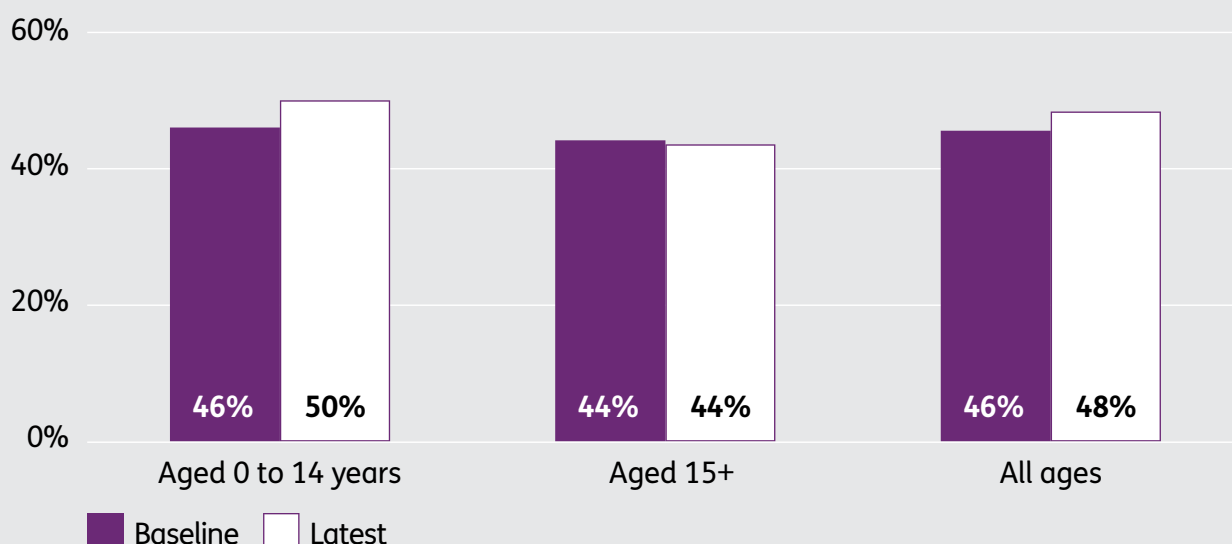
⁶ Participants entering between 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017.

3.5 Improvements in rates of employment for families/carers are patchy.

- a. For families/carers of participants aged 0-14 years, the employment rate has increased from 46% to 50%, but for families/carers of participants aged 15+ years, employment rates have remained at 44%.

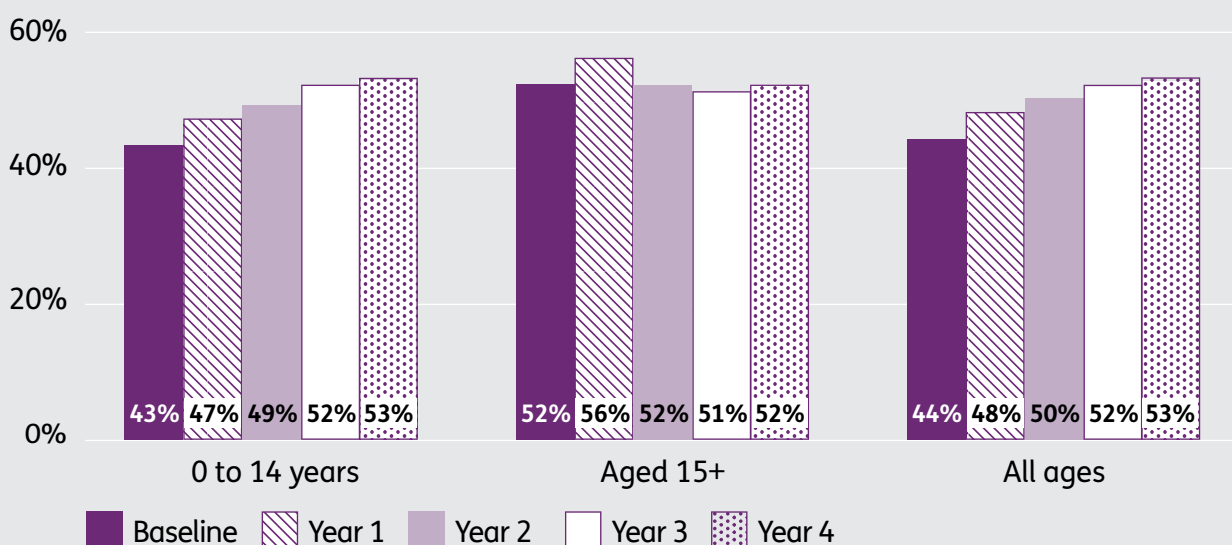
Figure 11: Families and carers with a paid job

Participants in the Scheme 2+ years⁷



- b. For participants aged 0-14 years who have been in the Scheme for at least four years, the percentage of families/carers in employment has increased from 43% to 53%. However for participants aged 15+ years, the percentage of families/carers in employment has remained the same at 52%.

Participants in the Scheme 4+ years⁸



⁷ Participants entering between 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2019.

⁸ Participants entering between 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017.

3.6 The cost of the Scheme is growing more rapidly than anticipated

The Agency released a comprehensive report on the financial sustainability of the Scheme on 3 July 2021.⁹ This report uses data as at 31 December 2020 to project the cost of the Scheme (and this projection is referred to as the 31 December 2020 update). The projection is higher than both the 2021-22 Portfolio Budget Statements (PBS) and the 2017 Productivity Commission (PC) projection.

Figure 12: Comparison of 31 December 2020 update, 2021-22 PBS and the 2017 PC projection

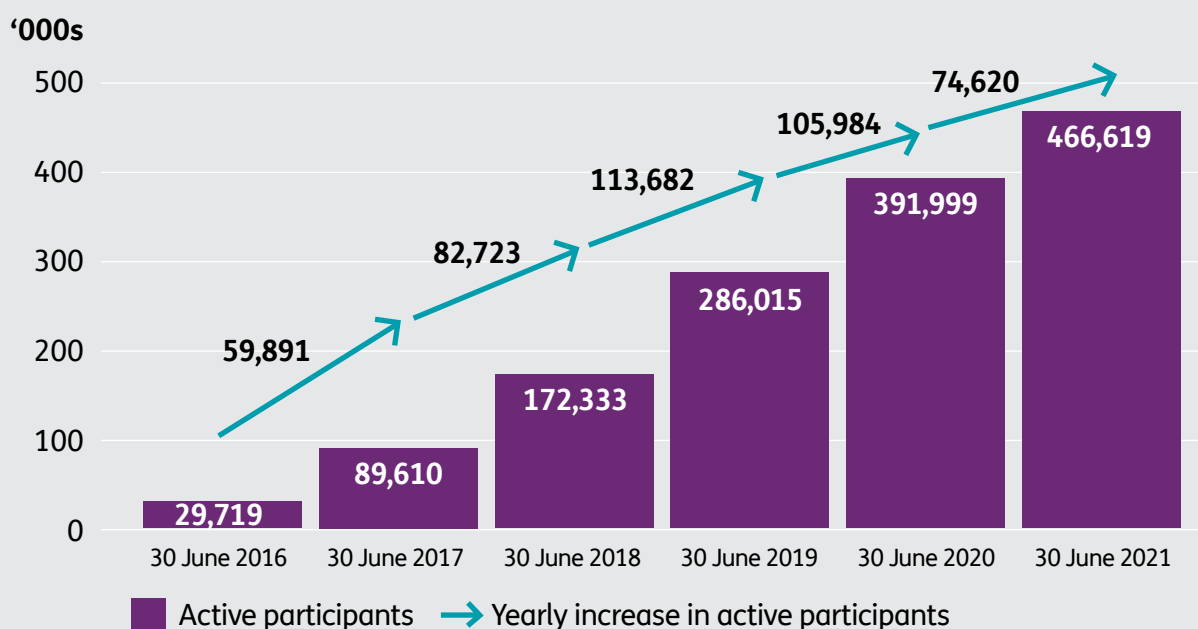
Total participant costs (\$m)	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Total
2017 Productivity Commission Estimates (a)	23,708	25,238	26,839	28,500	104,286
Portfolio Budget Statements 2021-22 (b)	26,487	28,257	29,425	31,884	116,053
31 December 2020 update (c) ¹⁰	28,139	32,900	36,905	40,659	138,603
Difference (b-a)	2,779	3,019	2,586	3,384	11,767
Difference (c-a)	4,430	7,662	10,067	12,158	34,317

Both the estimated number of future participants and the average payment per participant are driving total higher costs.

Participant numbers

The number of participants in the Scheme is close to 467,000, with nearly 75,000 entering in 2020-21.

Figure 13: Growth in participant numbers



⁹ <https://www.ndis.gov.au/news/6590-ndis-financial-sustainability-report-release>

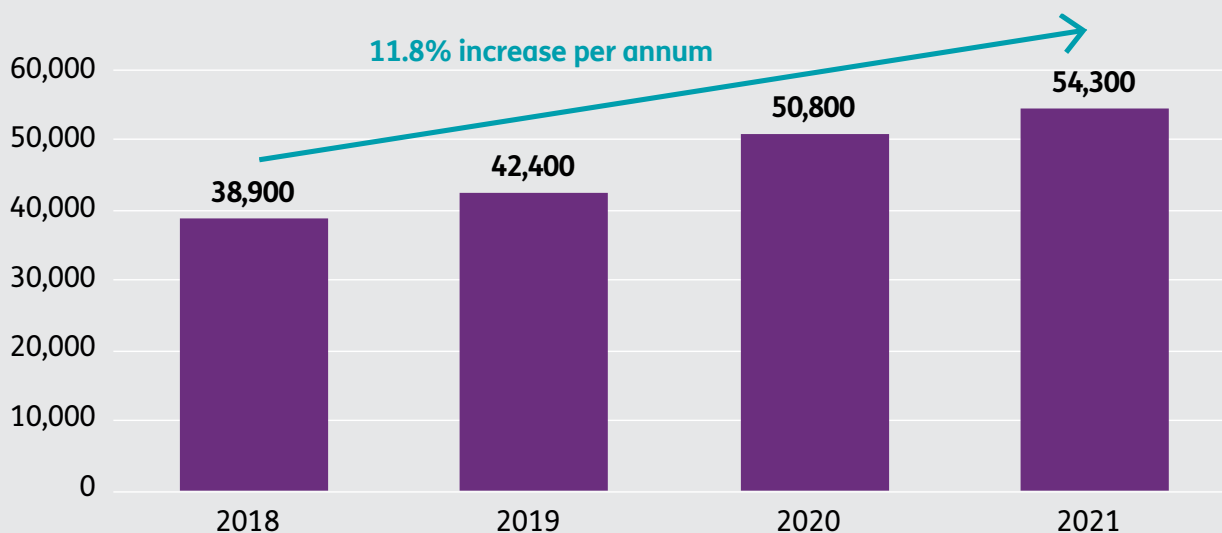
¹⁰ The 31 December 2020 projection is documented in the interim update to the AFSR summary released in July 2021.

Average payment per participant

The average payment per participant has continued to increase at 11.8 per cent in the three years to 30 June 2021. Further, the average payment has increased in the six months to 30 June 2021 to \$55,900 (or 6.8 per cent higher).¹¹

More detail on average payments per participant, by participant groups, and by State/Territory is included in Addendum 2 to this report.

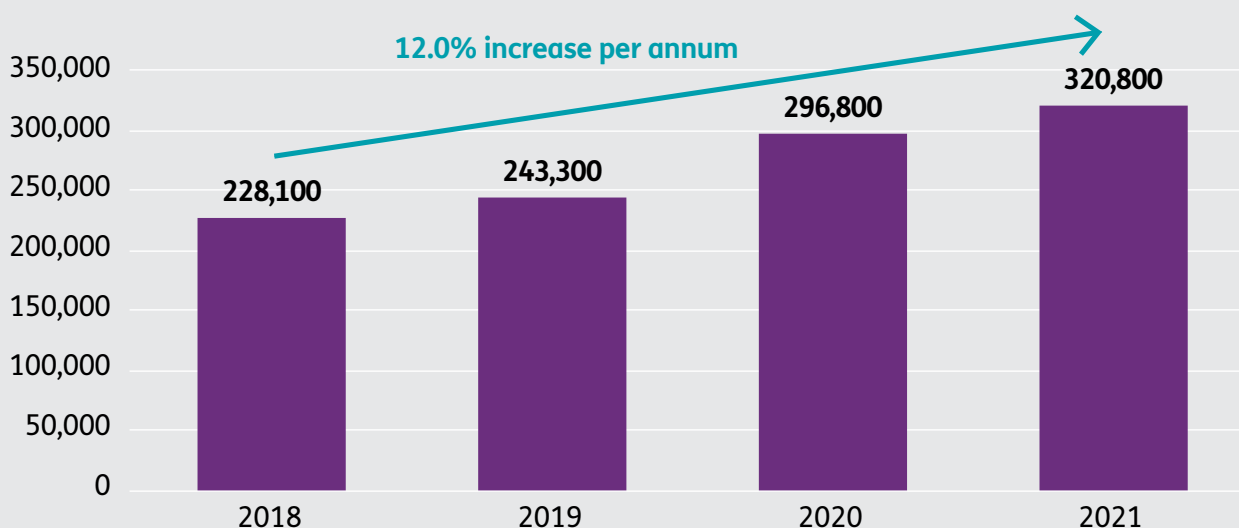
Figure 14: Average payments per year (\$)



Over the past four years, the mix of participants in the Scheme has changed. That is, as the Scheme has rolled out across the country, the proportion of participants by different characteristics has changed. As examples, the proportion of children in the Scheme is higher in 2020-21 compared with 2017-18, and the proportion of SIL participants in the Scheme is lower in 2020-21 compared with 2017-18.

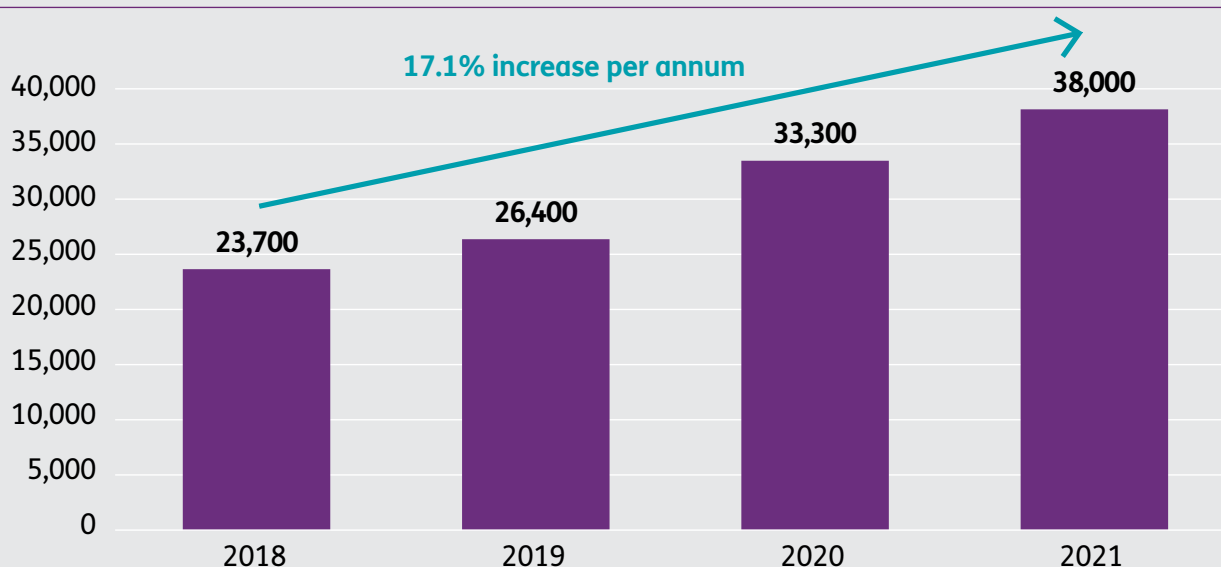
Analysing the change in average payment over time by whether or not participants are in SIL or not indicates that the average annual increase in average payment has been consistently high across both participant groups. Specifically, the average annual payment has increased for SIL participants by 12.0 per cent, and the average annual payment has increased for non-SIL participants by 17.1 per cent per year. These averages are higher than the overall average (of 11.8 per cent), as the proportion of participants in SIL has decreased over the period.

Figure 15: Average payments per year – SIL (\$)



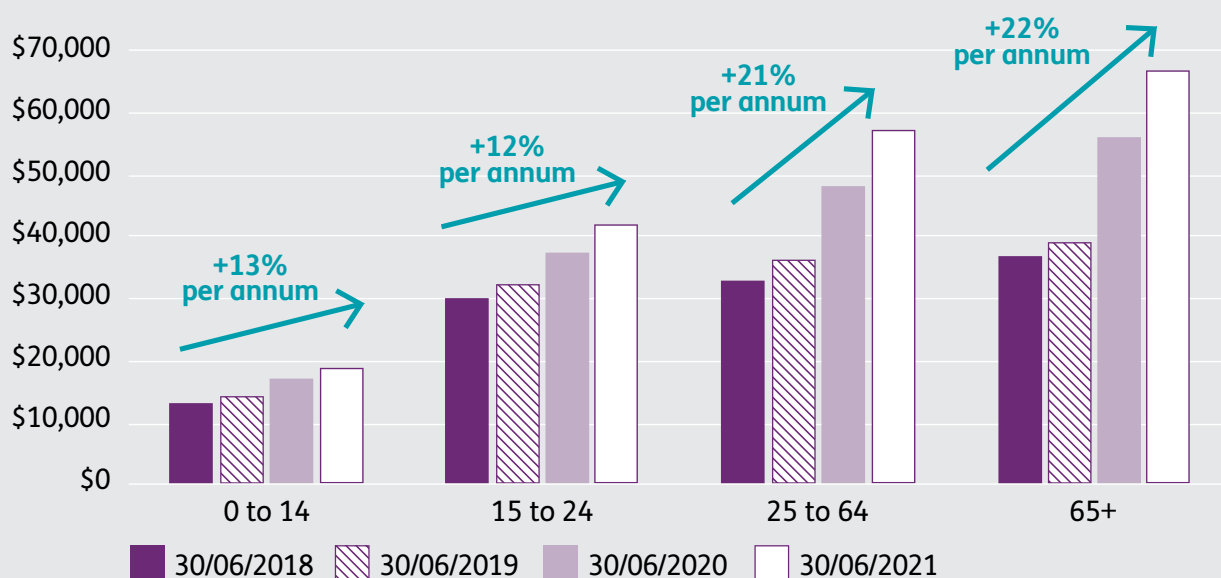
¹¹ The \$55,900 differs from the \$54,300 in Fig 14, as the \$55,900 is only related to the second half of 2020-21, and not the full year.

Figure 16: Average payments per year – Non-SIL (\$)



The figure below analyses the change in average payment over time by age band for participants not in SIL. The average increase for 0 to 14 year olds is 13 per cent, for 15 to 24 year olds it is 12 per cent, for 25 to 64 year olds it is 21 per cent, and for participants aged over 65 it is 22 per cent. For participants not in SIL, average payments have increased at a faster rate for adults (those aged over 25) and reflects a material increase in the hours of attendant care support these participants are receiving over time.

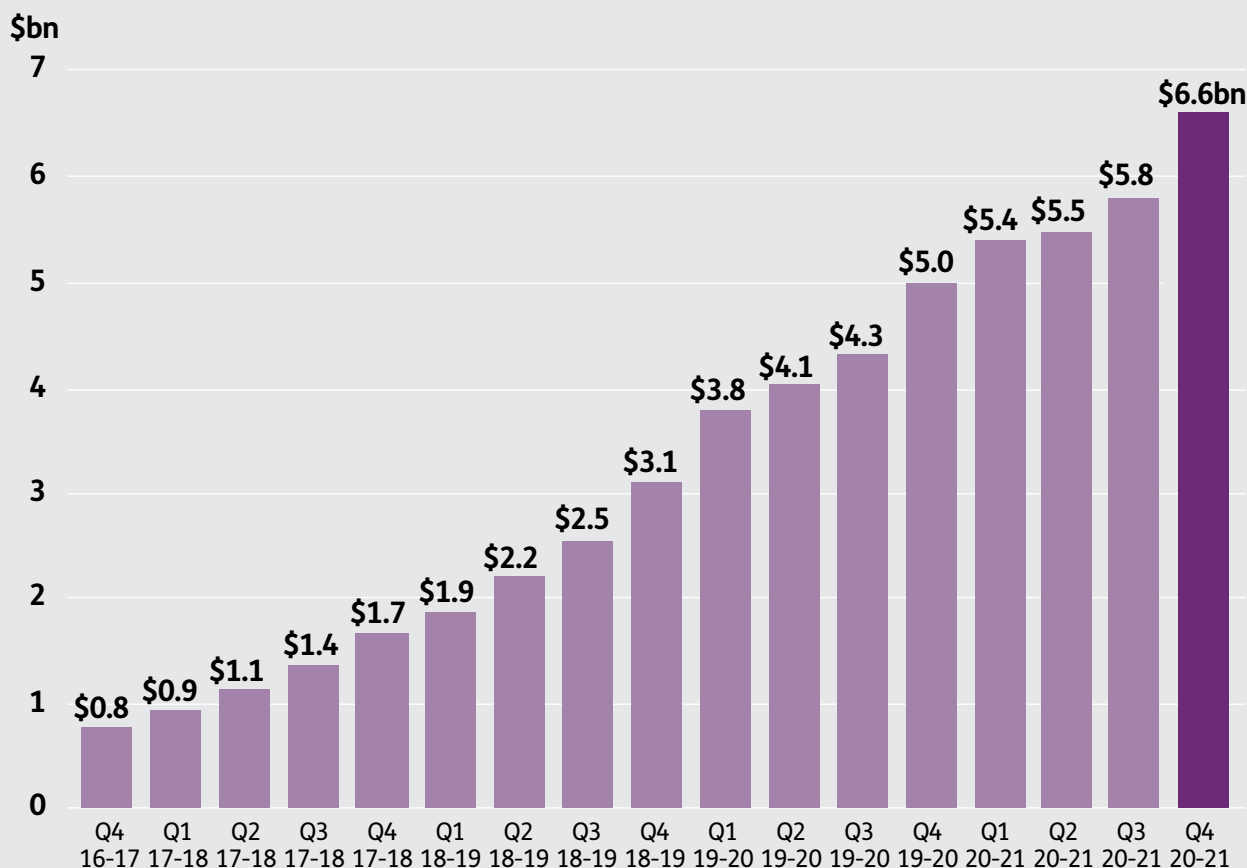
Figure 17: Average payments per year - by age bands (non-SIL) (\$)



Total participant costs

The increasing trend in average payments per participant, has resulted in total participant costs increasing to \$6.6 billion in the last quarter of 2020-21, which is a 33 per cent increase in total participant costs from the last quarter of 2019-20.

Figure 18: Total payments by quarter¹²



Section 5 of this report includes more detail on the projections of the Scheme and comparisons with both the 2021-22 PBS and 2017 PC projection, along with discussion of past projections.

¹² The chart represents the amount paid each quarter, regardless of when the support was provided.

4. Other actions are also required

The NDIA will continue to deliver on the work that is needed to improve participant outcomes and experience outlined in the Participant Service Guarantee (PSG) and the NDIS Service Improvement Plan. These efforts have already delivered improvements for participants but there is more to do.

4.1 Implement a new model of engagement with the disability sector to rebuild trust

Consistent with advice provided by the Independent Advisory Council (IAC), the NDIA will work to rebuild trust with the disability community through a more transparent, collaborative and forward-looking approach to ensuring the NDIS meets its objectives in relation to participants and the longer term sustainability of the Scheme. The NDIA will work with IAC and key representatives of the Disabled Persons' organisations to:

- Develop a compact or partnership agreement to outline expectations for working together that recognises the statutory decision-making responsibilities of the NDIA, utilises co-design to ensure that these accountabilities are achieved and moves towards best practice co-design in a statutory environment.
- Define co-design and identify practical opportunities for its application.
- Deliver an engagement roadmap which includes details on all Scheme Reform consultation, engagement and co-design opportunities.

4.2 Continue to support improved participant outcomes and experience through the Participant Service Guarantee and the Participant Service Improvement Plan

The PSG proposed by the Tune Review is designed to improve the fairness, consistency, and transparency delivered by the NDIA. The PSG sets timeframes for key NDIS processes such as access, plan approvals, plan reviews and nominee changes. Since mid-2020, the Agency has been reporting against these standards in our quarterly reports. Details of the PSG are outlined further in Section 3 of this report.

The Participant Service Improvement Plan is key to making real on our promises in the Participant Service Charter and Participant Service Guarantee. It reflects the feedback participants have given the Agency and sets out specific and tangible commitments that will build a better NDIS.

The Agency is also focusing on making its digital services easier and more efficient for participants, staff and service providers. This will include tracking an access request online and making payments easily through a new mobile app.

4.3 Undertake initiatives to continue to tackle fraud

At the 9 July Disability Ministers' Meeting, Ministers agreed to further strengthen fraud and integrity measures.

The NDIA maintains a zero-tolerance approach to fraud and the misuse of funds. The NDIA is committed to preventing and detecting fraud and non-compliance, and most importantly to protecting all participants.

The NDIS Fraud Taskforce, a joint activity between the Agency, Australian Federal Police (AFP) and Services Australia, has enabled the NDIA to develop effective detection of, and response to, serious and organised fraud against the Scheme.

As at 30 June 2021, there were 29 fraud investigations in progress and a further six matters being evaluated for possible investigation. Of these, nine matters are currently before the courts.

The NDIS Fraud Taskforce commenced Operation Pegasus in May 2020. On 20 April 2021, the AFP executed 10 search warrants across Western Sydney in partnership with the NDIA and Services Australia. Five people were arrested and charged with a range of Commonwealth fraud offences and ongoing enquiries are expected to result in the charging of a sixth potential offender.

The Agency also conducts a range of compliance activities. In 2020-21, the Agency undertook more than 2,800 compliance activities. These included targeted and proactive engagement to treat payment risks through opportunistic and non-compliant behaviour from providers, plan management agencies, and participants identified through tip-offs.

The NDIA is continuously strengthening its end-to-end processes, including access, planning, claims and payments to further protect the integrity of the NDIS. In addition, we continue to invest in building our capability and systems to identify, respond to, and prevent fraud and non-compliance.

4.4 Implement the outcomes of various consultation processes

Reviewing Early Childhood Approach

In November 2020, the NDIA commenced a review of the Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) approach and consulted with families of young children with developmental delay or disability, providers, Early Childhood partners, staff, peak bodies and stakeholders across the early childhood sector. Two papers were released seeking feedback on 23 draft recommendations. The consultation period closed on 23 February 2021 and the NDIA has reviewed the 192 submissions received to inform an ECEI Reset planning and implementation phase over the next two years. As part of the review, the NDIA has already delivered three recommendations, including:

- Renaming the approach to supporting children younger than 7 and their families (now ‘Early Childhood Approach’);
- Publishing new, simple to understand operational guidelines and strengthened information about best practice in early childhood intervention; and
- Clarifying the interpretation and application of the developmental delay criteria

The NDIA will continue engaging with stakeholders on a range of improvements to the Early Childhood Approach. This process will help inform the design of the ECEI Reset, with changes expected to be implemented from late 2021 and over the following two years.

Guidance and information on interventions for children on the autism spectrum

The NDIA is developing new guidance and information about what is considered reasonable and necessary support for children on the autism spectrum. In March 2021, the NDIA released the ‘Interventions for children on the autism spectrum’ paper. The Agency has received more than 450 submissions in response to the paper. In addition, the Agency has consulted on this paper with the Independent Advisory Council and the Autism Advisory Group. The NDIA will now closely consider this feedback and engage with the sector in efforts to deliver better outcomes for children on the autism spectrum and their families.

Supporting NDIS participants to pursue their home and living goals

The NDIA is developing a new Home and Living policy that will inform the way the Agency supports participants to pursue their home and living goals. The NDIA wants to give participants more choice and control over where they live, who they live with and the supports they use. We also want to support participants to build the skills they need to live independently.

In June 2021, the NDIA released 'An Ordinary Life at Home' paper to seek feedback from participants and the wider sector. The consultation paper was developed with support from the NDIA's Independent Advisory Council. The Agency will use feedback gathered during the Home and Living consultation period to further engage with the sector to develop the policy and determine the next steps for implementation.

Empowering NDIS participants' decisions

In June 2021, the NDIA released a consultation paper on improving decision-making support for participants. The paper and accompanying survey was developed with input from participants, nominees, families and carers through the NDIS Participant Reference Group, as well as a range of stakeholders. The NDIA is now seeking feedback from participants and the wider sector on how to ensure participants play a bigger role in determining how they are supported.

5. Support for participants and disability workers continues through the COVID-19 pandemic

The NDIA continues to work across Government, including with the Department of Social Services (DSS), the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (NDIS Commission), Services Australia, and state and territory governments to ensure continuity of essential supports for NDIS participants. This includes a specific focus on supporting participants during COVID-19 outbreaks (especially relevant in the current lockdowns in NSW, Victoria and South Australia).

Initiatives introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic to support participants (such as regular check-ins, and low cost assistive technology to support continuing services) continue where appropriate. NDIS services have been refined during COVID-19 to keep participants safe.

- Significant support has been delivered to participants during COVID-19. This has resulted in the participant infection rate being lower than the general population
- Significant support is being provided to the Department of Health to facilitate their roll-out of vaccines¹³

NDIA management continues to work with participants, their families and carers, providers and the disability community to develop initiatives to support contact with family and friends, increase social and economic participation, and reduce social isolation during the pandemic.

The NDIS website should be consulted for the latest information of COVID-19
- <https://www.ndis.gov.au/coronavirus/latest-advice-ndis>.

¹³ <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/information-for-service-providers-workers-and-people-with-disability-about-covid-19-vaccines/information-for-people-with-disability-about-covid-19-vaccines>

Introduction

This report is a summary of the performance and operations of the NDIA for the three months from 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021, as required by Section 174 of the NDIS Act 2013.

Analysis and key insights are presented in the report, with detailed supplementary tables included in the appendices. The national results are contained in Appendix E, followed by individual appendices for each State and Territory (Appendices F–M). Also included in the appendices are:

- A list of key definitions of the terms used in this report (Appendix A)
- A comparison of key metrics across each State and Territory (Appendix N)
- The number of active participants in each service district, including the number of active participants in each region receiving core, capacity building and capital supports (Appendix O)
- The number of active participants in each service district receiving Special Disability Accommodation and Supported Independent Living, along with data on the number and types of dwellings in each statistical area region. Data on the demand for SDA within the NDIS is also included (Appendix P)
- A comparison of utilisation by service district (Appendix Q)
- Waiting times for access decisions and plan approvals by State/Territory (Appendix R)



Blind Para-cyclist champion says NDIS has changed his life

World champion blind Para-cyclist **Kieran**, is training to compete at the Tokyo Olympics, and next year's Birmingham Commonwealth Games. Kieran, 27, lives with a rare genetic degenerative eye condition, which means he has been slowly losing his eyesight since he was born, and will eventually lose all his vision.

"I now have less than 5 degrees of vision and am legally blind," he said.

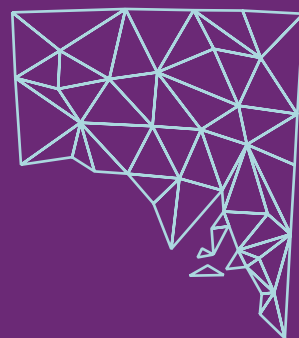
"When I read a book I can see one to two letters at a time, so I need help with a lot of things. I've lost quite a bit of sight in the past six months."

Kieran is currently training about 500 kilometres a week with the help of a NDIS-funded support worker who pilots his tandem bicycle.

"I wouldn't be able to do this without the NDIS," he said. "You need someone to ride on the front of your bike to be able to train. To find someone to commit to go for a bike ride with me for four hours every day, was impossible before the NDIS, so I did most of my training indoors, which just isn't the same."

The NDIS supports Kieran to live an independent life and to achieve his goals, not just on the elite cycling track, but in every aspect of his daily life, including supporting him to work fulltime, to learn new skills, go on holidays, socialise with friends, and keep fit at the gym.

"What the NDIS has enabled me to do are things I couldn't do before or I struggled with before. Life has got a whole lot easier with the NDIS."



Part One:

Participants and their plans



Part One:

Participants and their plans

Approximately 467,000 participants are receiving supports from the NDIS, with approximately 13,400 children receiving initial supports in the Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) gateway.

1.1 Number of participants in the Scheme

At 30 June 2021, approximately 467,000 participants had an NDIS plan. Approximately 18,400 entered the Scheme during the quarter.

At 30 June 2021, 466,619 participants had approved plans.¹⁴ This represents a four per cent increase from last quarter (an additional 18,352 participants).

Further, the NDIA undertook 91,010 reviews in the quarter.

Figure 19: Active participants with approved plans and percentage increase over time

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Active participants	7,285	17,155	29,719	89,610	172,333	286,015	391,999	466,619
Yearly increase ¹⁵		9,870	12,564	59,891	82,723	113,682	105,984	74,620
% increase in active participants		135%	73%	202%	92%	66%	37%	19%

¹⁴ 17,268 participants with approved plans had exited the Scheme as at 31 March 2021.

¹⁵ This is the net increase in the number of participants entering the Scheme each period noting some participants have exited the Scheme.

1.2 Children in the NDIS (aged 0 to 6 years)

At 30 June 2021, there were approximately 72,000 children aged 0 to 6 years with an NDIS plan, and a further 13,400 receiving initial supports in the gateway.

Of the 466,619 participants with an approved plan at 30 June 2021, 72,258 were children aged 0-6 (16 per cent), and of the 18,352 new participants with an approved plan this quarter, 6,386 were children aged 0-6 years (35 per cent).

In addition to the 72,258 children aged 0-6 with an approved plan:

- **4,119** children had met the access criteria under Section 24 of the NDIS Act (Permanent Disability) or Section 25 of the NDIS Act (Early Intervention) and were waiting for an approved plan.
- **2,890** were awaiting an access decision from the NDIA (of which **1,990** (67%) were receiving initial supports in the ECEI gateway).
- **11,831** children were in the ECEI gateway (of which **11,410** (95%) had already commenced receiving initial supports). Not all children in the gateway will need to make an access request to the NDIA because some will receive support in the gateway, along with support from mainstream and community services.

The Early Childhood Approach is based on the principles of best practice in early childhood intervention and allows for access to timely, targeted and individualised early childhood intervention supports for children with developmental delay or disability and their families.

In 2020, the NDIA conducted a review of the Early Childhood Approach through consultation with families of young children with developmental delay or disability, providers, Early Childhood partners, staff, peak bodies and other stakeholders across the early childhood sector. Two papers were released seeking feedback on 23 draft recommendations. The papers released were the [ECEI Implementation Reset Project consultation report](#) and [Supporting young children and their families early, to reach their full potential](#).

The papers explained the work undertaken, what the NDIA plans to do as part of the review of the Early Childhood Approach, and why feedback is being sought from the community and sector. The consultation period closed on 23 February 2021 and the NDIA has reviewed the 192 submissions received to inform an ECEI Reset planning and implementation phase over the next two years. The NDIA will be engaging with the early childhood sector on how to implement the 23 Reset recommendations.

During the June 2021 quarter the below priority recommendations were completed and are currently being implemented:

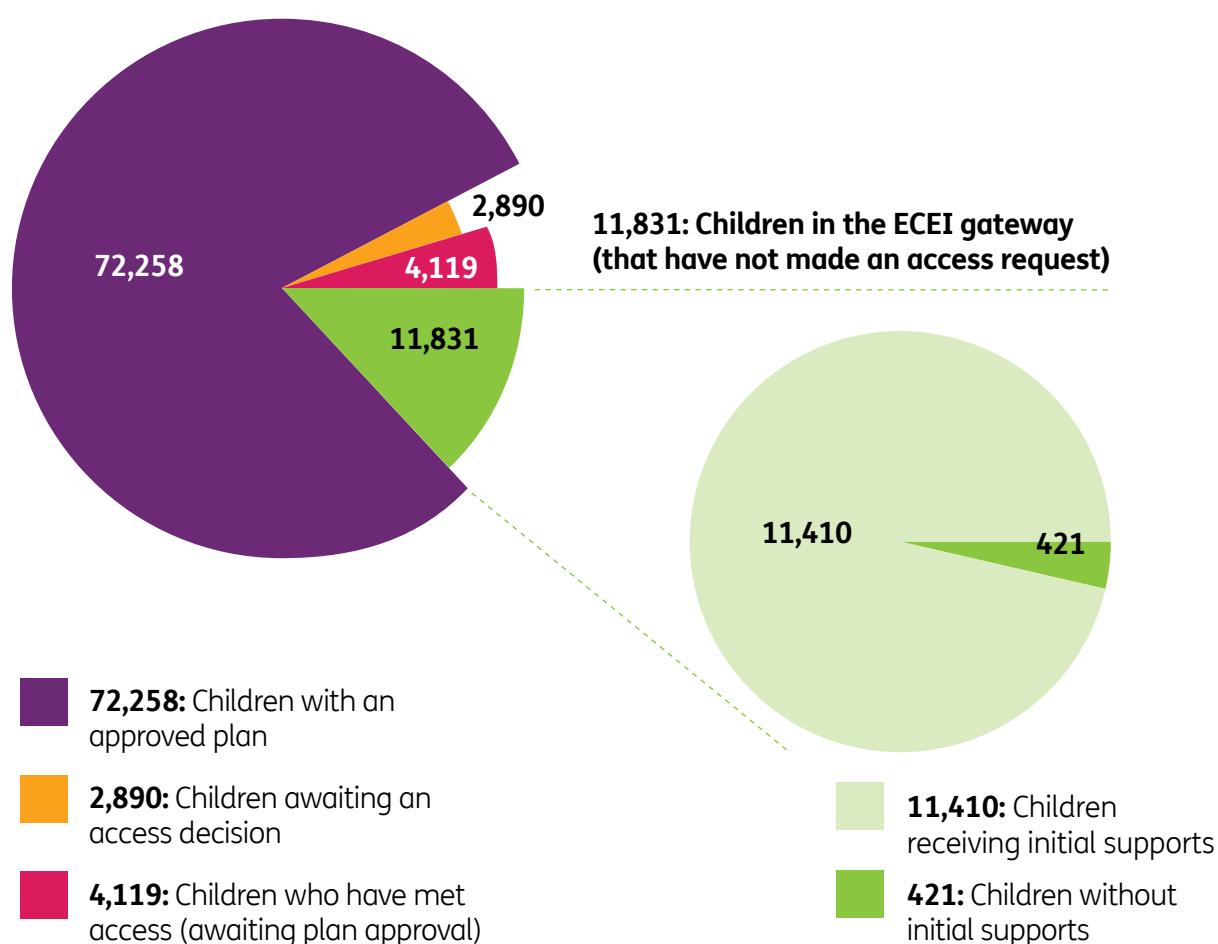
- The development and publication of early childhood-specific Operating Guidelines to deliver improved and consistent information on how children and their families can access early childhood intervention supports from the NDIS, that are underpinned by best practice principles and implemented consistently by partners and NDIS planners.
- Clarification of the interpretation of the developmental delay criteria under Section 25 of the NDIS Act (2013) to improve the consistency and equity of Agency decision making and provide enhanced guidance for children, families, carers, and the sector.

Part One: Participants and their plans

A number of other priority recommendations continue to progress. These include:

- Continuing to work with Early Childhood Partners to improve the program design for Short Term Early Intervention (STEI) for eligible young children and families.
- Improving the existing review process for young children, to support families to celebrate the achievement of reaching their goals and outcomes, and transition from NDIS supports to the next stage of their lives

Figure 20: Children in the NDIS



1.3 Participant characteristics

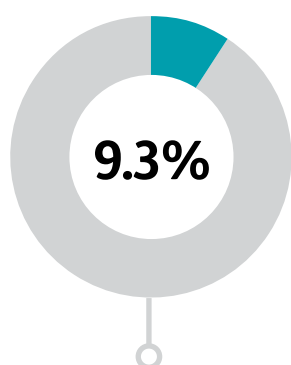
The NDIA continues to monitor and focus on the number of participants entering the Scheme who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and who are Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD).

Of the 18,352 participants entering and receiving a plan in the quarter:

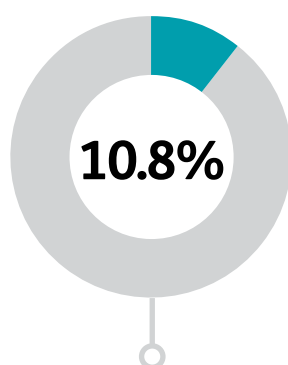
– **9.3%** were **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders**.

– **10.8%** were **CALD**.

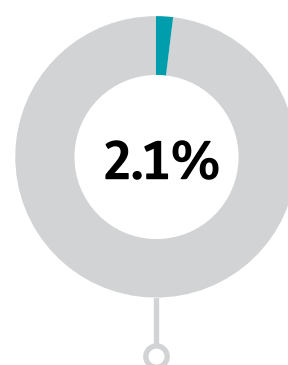
– **2.1%** were from **remote and very remote areas**.



participants who received a plan this quarter identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander



participants who received a plan this quarter identify as Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

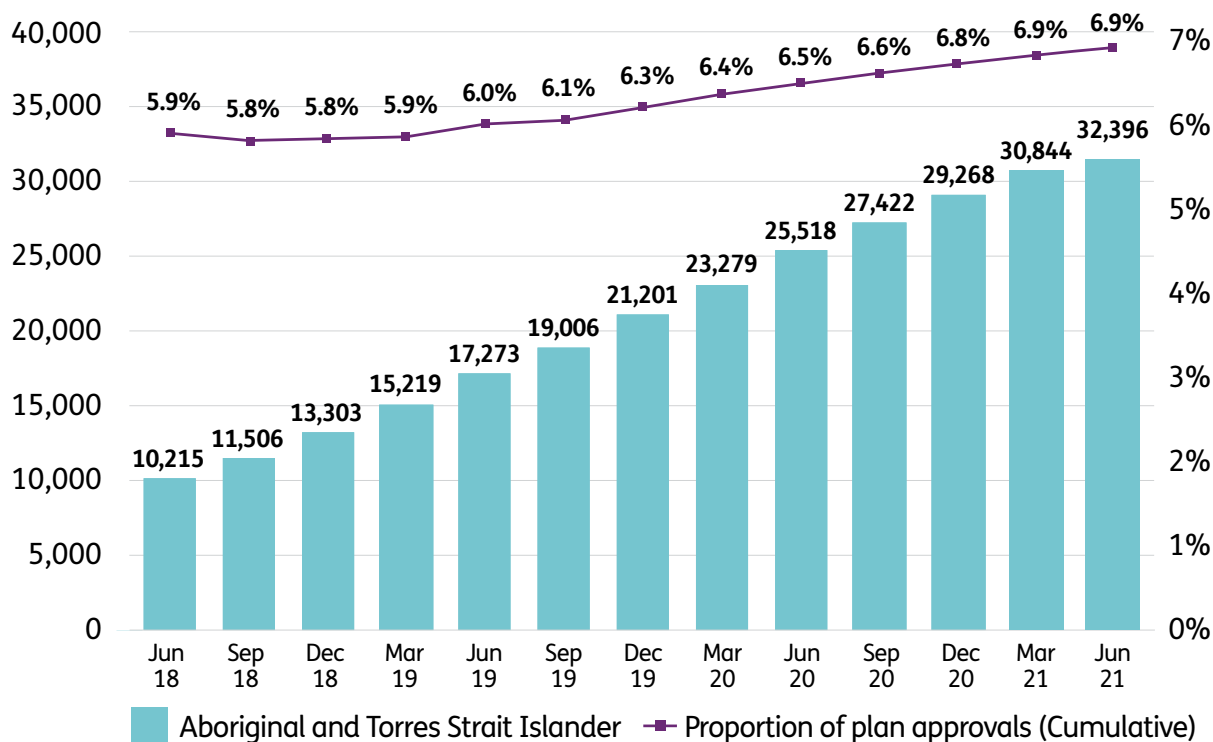
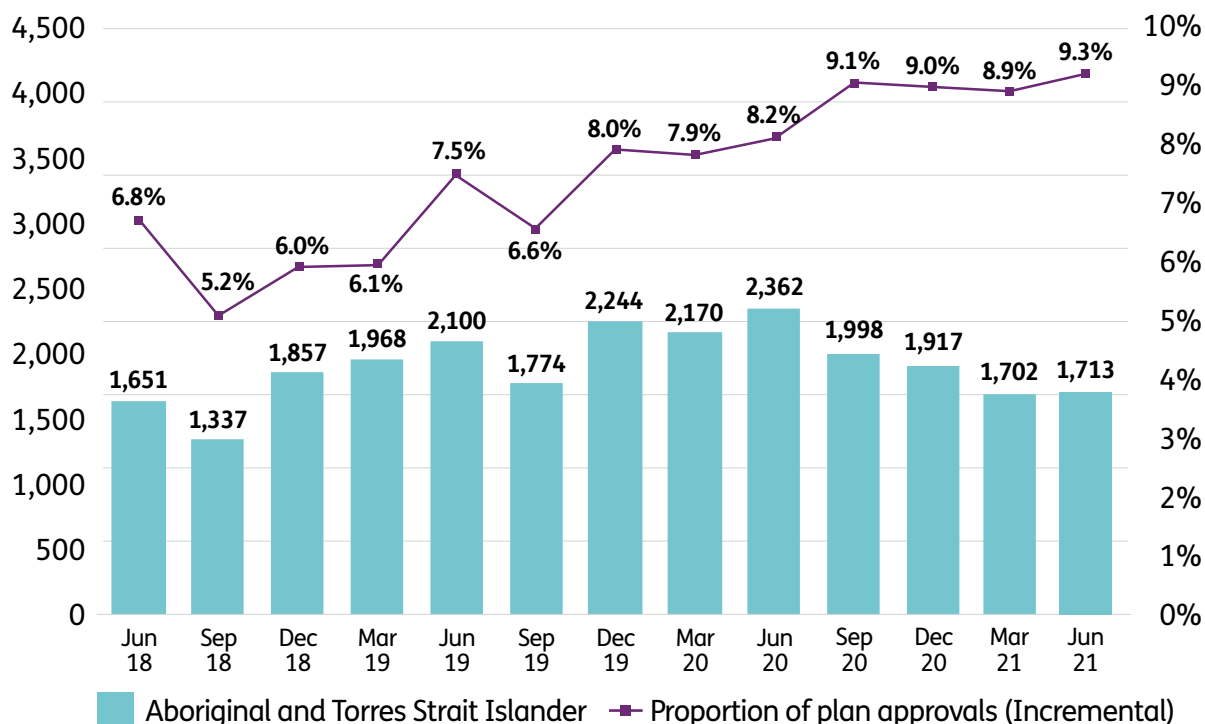


participants who received a plan this quarter were from remote/very remote regions

The NDIA has released progress updates on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement Strategy and the Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Strategy, detailing the Agency's key activities against the priorities listed in the strategies. The progress updates also identify additional actions to further drive the implementation of the strategies over the next 18 months, while the NDIA completes a full refresh of the strategies. The NDIA will commence engagement in late 2021 with stakeholders from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and CALD backgrounds, including participants, families, carers and the sector to develop the refreshed strategies, which will be completed in 2022.

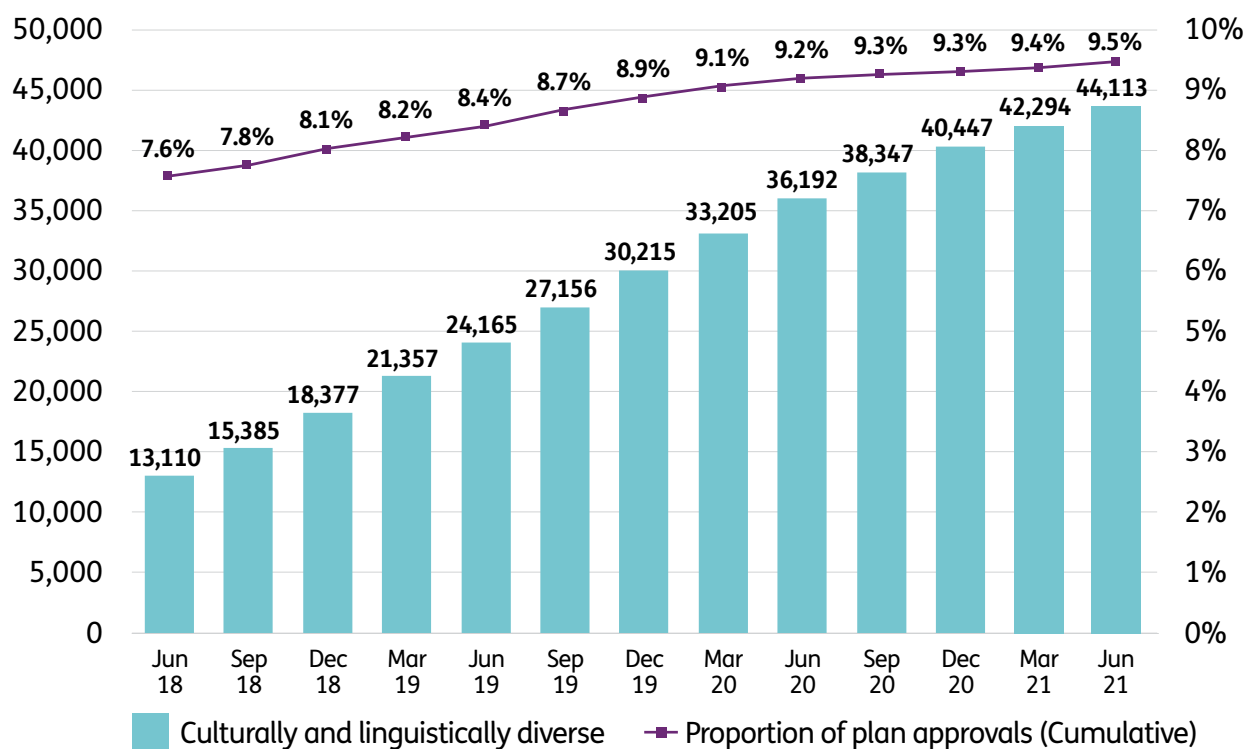
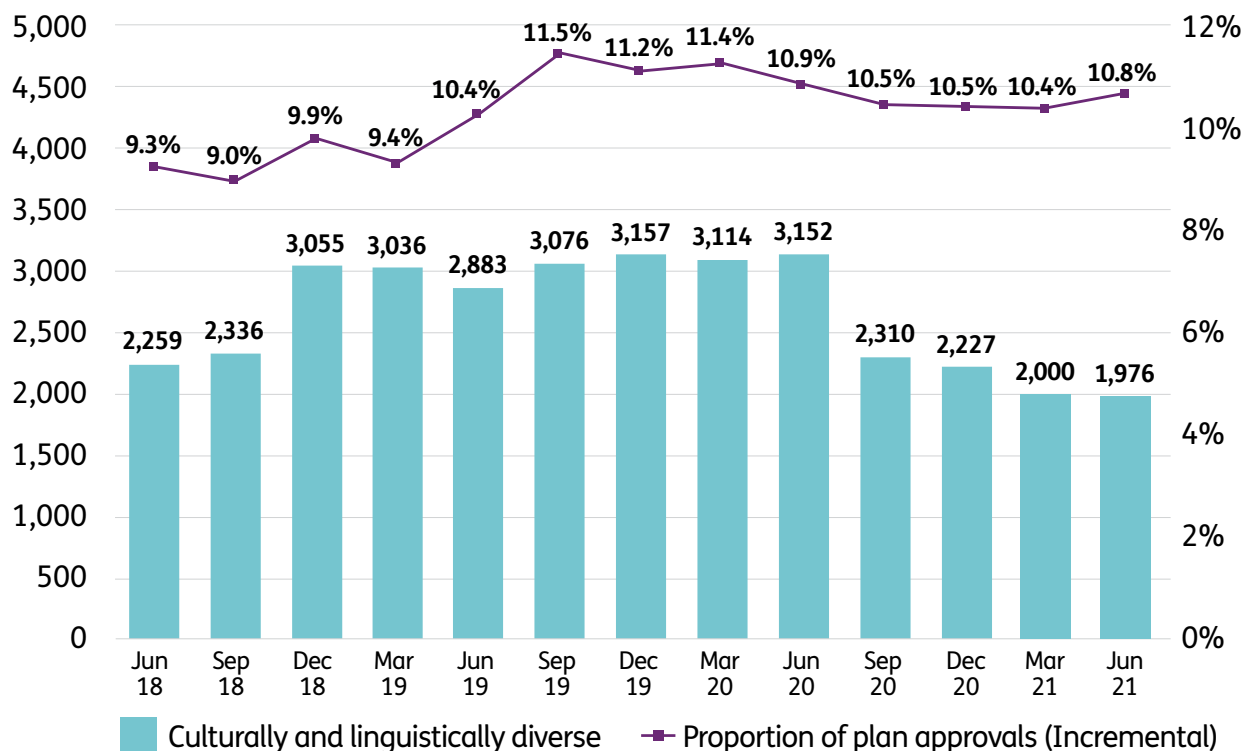
In addition, the NDIA will develop a position statement on remote service delivery in 2021-22 to further enhance the NDIS experience and outcomes for people with disability living in remote Australia. Recognising that the NDIS is part of a broader government service delivery ecosystem in remote communities, the statement will also articulate the NDIA's approach to improved coordination across all levels of government to maximise participant outcomes.

Figure 21: Number and proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants over time incrementally (top) and cumulatively (bottom)¹⁶



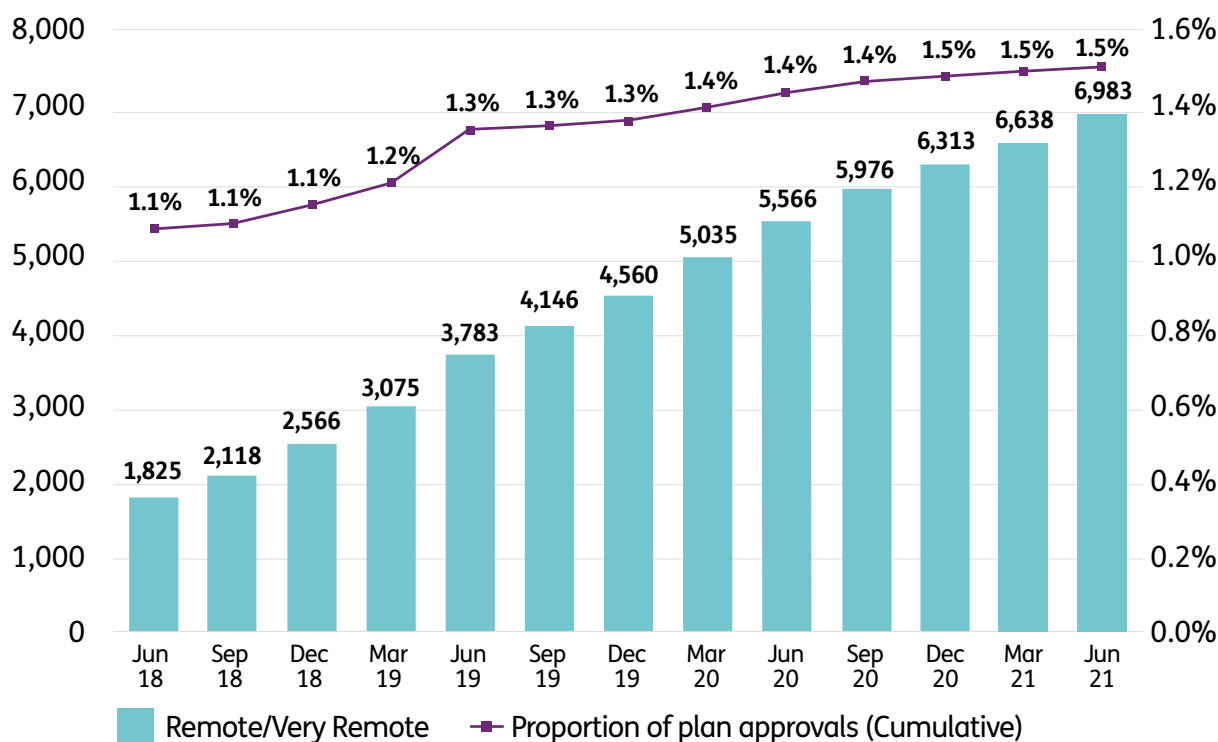
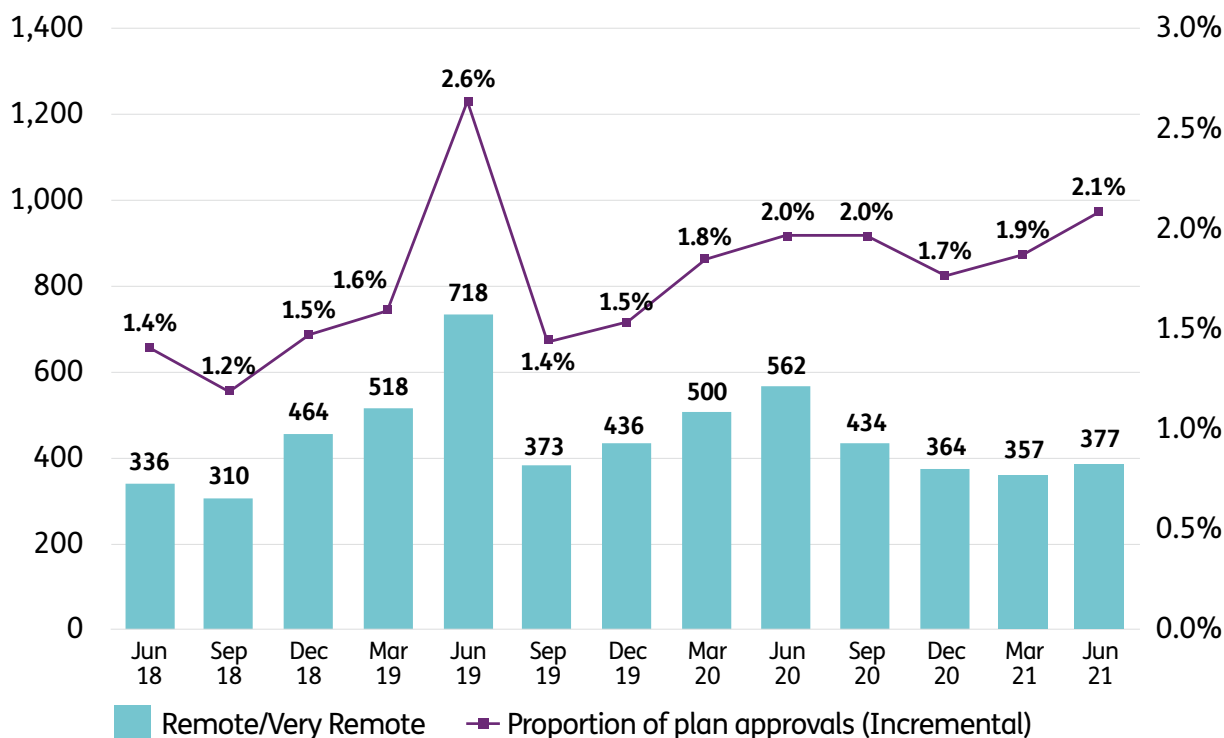
¹⁶ The incremental chart shows the distribution of new participants that have entered in each quarter. The cumulative chart shows the distribution of active participants as at each quarter over time. Quarterly results are reported based on a rolling 3 year period.

Figure 22: Number and proportion of CALD participants over time incrementally (top) and cumulatively (bottom)¹⁷



¹⁷ The incremental chart shows the distribution of new participants that have entered in each quarter. The cumulative chart shows the distribution of active participants as at each quarter over time. Quarterly results are reported based on a rolling 3 year period.

Figure 23: Number and proportion of remote/very remote participants over time incrementally (top) and cumulatively (bottom)¹⁸



¹⁸ The incremental chart shows the distribution of new participants that have entered in each quarter. The cumulative chart shows the distribution of active participants as at each quarter over time. Quarterly results are reported based on a rolling 3 year period.

Age and disability

The breakdown of participants by **age** and **disability** this quarter indicates:

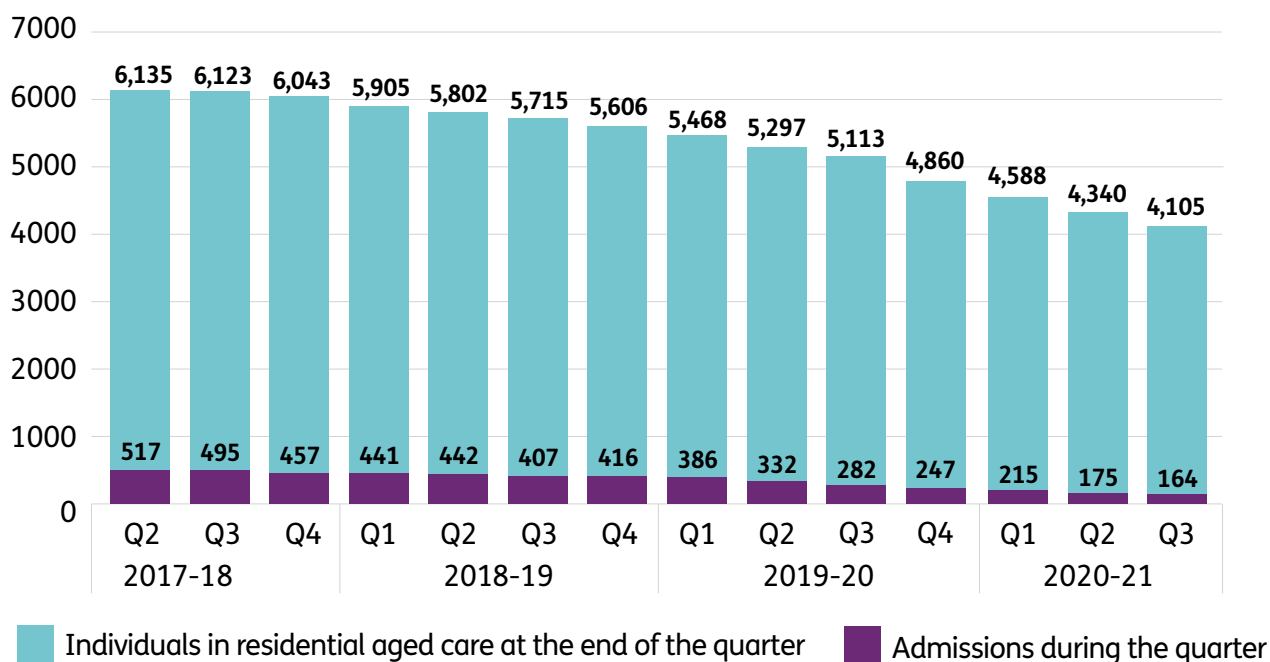
- continuation of a high proportion of children **aged 0-6 years** entering the Scheme (**34.8%** this quarter and **35.0%** in the March 2021 quarter).
- consistent with the high numbers of children, a relatively higher proportion of participants with **Developmental Delay** entered the Scheme again this quarter (**21.7%** this quarter and **21.8%** in the March 2021 quarter.)
- **Psychosocial Disability: 13.5%** of participants who received a plan in the quarter, compared to **10.2%** in the previous quarters combined.

Younger People in Residential Aged Care (YPIRAC)

The number of people in residential aged care under the age of 65 years, including those who are not participants of the Scheme, has decreased in recent quarters from 6,135 at 31 December 2017 to 4,105 at 31 March 2021 (a 33 per cent decrease).

Also, fewer people under the age of 65 years are entering residential aged care – 517 people under the age of 65 years entered in the December 2017 quarter, compared with 164 in the March 2021 quarter (a 68 per cent decrease).

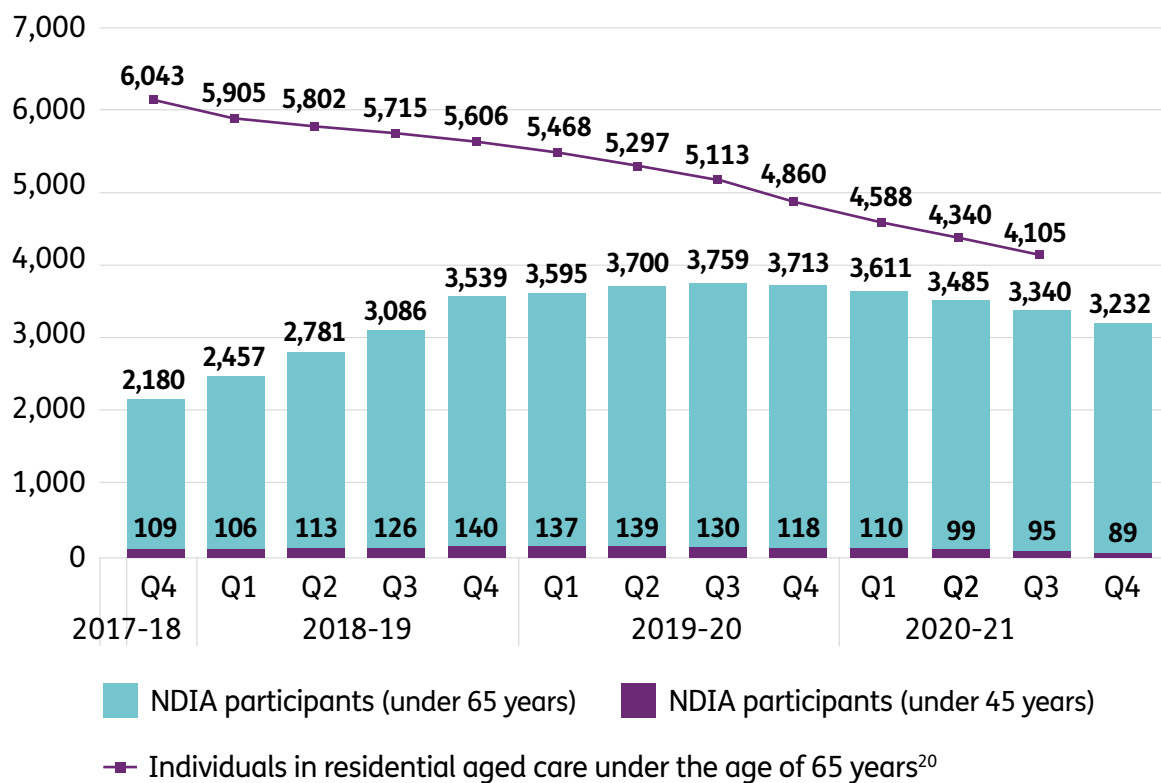
Figure 24: Number of individuals in residential aged care and admissions to residential aged care (under 65 years), by quarter



Part One: Participants and their plans

There were 3,232 participants in residential aged care with an approved plan at 30 June 2021 aged under 65 years. In addition to this, 680 participants who entered the Scheme and have been in residential aged care have exited since 1 July 2016 to a more appropriate accommodation setting.¹⁹ Of the 3,232 participants in residential aged care under 65 years, 89 are aged under 45 years (2.8 per cent).

Figure 25: Number of NDIA participants in residential aged care (under 65 and under 45), and total number of individuals under age 65 in residential aged care



¹⁹ There were a further 1,804 participants with an approved plan aged 65 years or over who are currently in residential aged care.

²⁰ Data provided by the Department of Health is at 31 December 2020. 31 March 2021 data will be reported next quarter.

Government response to final report from the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety

The Australian Government response to the final report of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety was released on 11 May 2021. Recommendation 74 in the response reconfirmed the commitments announced by the Australian Prime Minister on 25 November 2019 to ensure that:

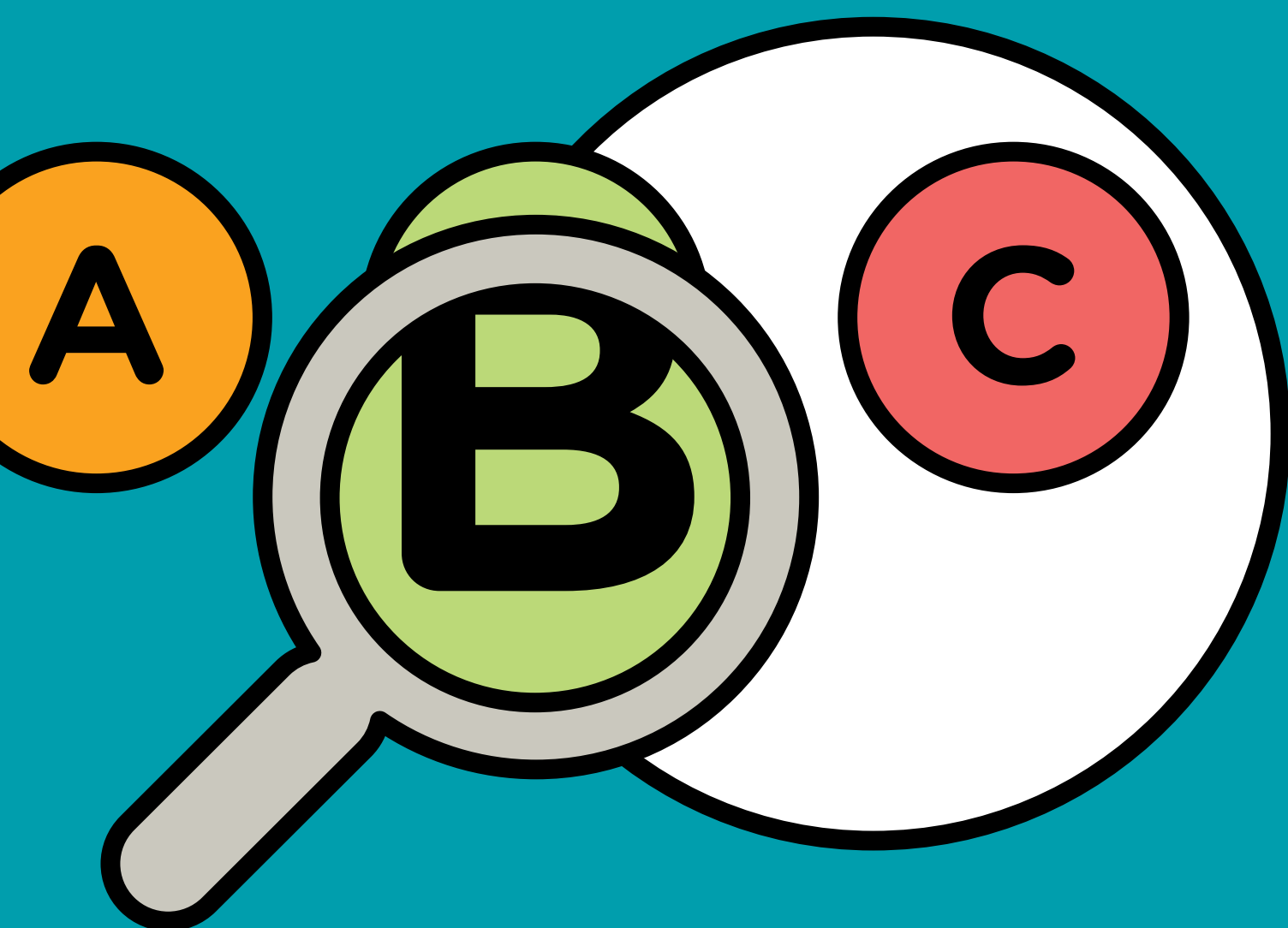
- a) no person under the age of 65 years enters residential aged care from 1 January 2022
- b) no person under the age of 45 years lives in residential aged care from 1 January 2022
- c) no person under the age of 65 years lives in residential aged care from 1 January 2025

The NDIA continues to work with the Joint Agency Taskforce between DSS and the Department of Health on the YPIRAC Strategy 2020-25 (the Strategy) to meet the targets. The Strategy covers all younger people under the age of 65 living in, or at risk of entering, residential aged care, including providing choice to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people between 50 and 64 years of age who are eligible for the aged care system.

The NDIA continues to work on reducing the number of participants entering residential aged care and to support participants already living in residential aged care to move into more age-appropriate accommodation, unless the person has exercised informed choice and decided to remain in residential aged care.

Part Two:

Participant experience and outcomes



Participant experience and outcomes

Some outcomes continue to improve the longer participants are in the Scheme, but there is still more to do.

2.1 Participant safety and contact

The NDIA is cooperating with all relevant inquiries in response to the tragic cases of participant deaths reported in the media.

The NDIA continues to review and improve its business operating processes to ensure participants get the support they need. The Participant Check-in process will continue to be embedded and enhanced in 2021 to support all participants, including vulnerable participants.

2.2 Participation in work and community and social activities

Despite COVID-19, participation rates in community and social activities have increased, while the overall rate of participation in work is stable.

Participation in community and social activities

For participants who have been in the Scheme for at least two years, their community and social participation has increased since they first entered²¹. There was a:

- **nine** percentage increase from **34%** to **43%** for participants aged 15–24 years.
- **eight** percentage increase from **37%** to **45%** for participants aged 25+ years.
- **nine** percentage increase from **36%** to **45%** for participants aged 15+ years.

Participation in work

The overall rate of participation in work for those in the Scheme continues to be relatively stable. However, for those who have been in the Scheme for at least two years there have only been marginal increases in employment. There was a:

- **nine** percentage increase from **12%** to **21%** for participants aged 15–24 years.²²
- **two** percentage decrease from **25%** to **23%** for participants aged 25+ years, which is concerning
- **no** change of **22%** for participants aged 15+ years.

²¹ This section compares Baseline indicator results when participants entered the Scheme, with results measured at the most recent participant plan review for each respondent. Trial participants are excluded.

²² Some of the increase is due to participants leaving school and starting work. As the Scheme matures it will be possible to analyse the extent to which the percentage gap increases.

NDIS Participant Employment Strategy

The NDIA recognises the critical role of employment in boosting the well-being, economic security and social inclusion of people with disability. The NDIA has a target of 30 per cent of working-age participants in paid employment by June 2023 (up from 23 per cent currently). The NDIS Participant Employment Strategy 2019-22 (the Strategy) sets out how this target will be reached.

In May 2021, the NDIA published a summary report on the progress of implementing the Strategy. It also published a revised Action Plan that takes into account the impact of the COVID pandemic and other key developments. The new Action Plan identifies six priority areas and 12 actions, which collectively will give the Strategy a sharper focus.

Revised Action Plan 2021-2022

In light of COVID-19, the strategy has been updated to target six priority areas over the next 18 months including:

- Stimulating innovative, evidence-based participant centric employment supports;
- Strengthening the link between education and employment outcomes for young people;
- Building new partnerships that lead to jobs;
- Promoting disability employment through use of the Agency's purchasing power;
- Equipping participants to navigate a complex disability employment system; and
- Ensuring the right employment goals and supports are in participants' plans

The Action Plan supports the transition of all Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs) to the new NDIS pricing model by the end of 2021. The new pricing model allows providers to claim for the actual hours and ratios of support they deliver. Further, it expands the range of employment settings in which NDIS participants can receive on-the-job training and support, which will stimulate the evolution of the market and promote the provision of effective, innovative and evidence-based employment supports.

Another key aim of the Action Plan is to strengthen the pathways from school to work, including through improved access to work experience. With this aim, the NDIA has commenced an analysis of School Leaver Employment Supports to ensure they are effective.

Some NDIS participants find the complexity of the disability employment system frustrating. The NDIA has commenced work revising guidance resources to assist participants in their job-seeking journey.

Local Area Co-ordinators (LACs) and planning staff perform a critical role supporting participants to develop plans that help them achieve their employment goals. As part of the Action Plan, the NDIA is revising and updating materials to assist LACs and planners with this important work.

The NDIA is acutely aware that successfully implementing the NDIS Participant Employment Strategy requires a partnership approach that extends to other key government agencies and to stakeholders outside government, including employers. A key partner within government is the Department of Social Services (DSS) which administers the Disability Employment Services program and is developing the National Disability Employment Strategy. The NDIA is working closely with DSS to ensure that the respective roles and responsibilities of the two agencies are complementary and work to benefit the employment of people with disability.

2.3 Analysis of participant outcomes

Participants continue to report positive outcomes.

Participants who entered the Scheme since 1 July 2016 were asked ‘Has the NDIS helped?’ at each participant plan review, allowing the NDIA to gain valuable longitudinal insights.

Participants who have been in the Scheme for at least two years

From 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2021, for participants who have been in the Scheme for at least two years²³, the following outcomes have been recorded:

For children aged 0 to before starting school:

- **95%** of parents and carers thought the NDIS improved their child’s development at their most recent plan review, compared to **92%** at their first review.
- **95%** felt the NDIS improved their child’s access to specialist services at their latest plan review, compared to **91%** at their first review.

For children starting school to 14 years:

- **70%** of parents and carers felt their child had become more independent as a result of the NDIS at their most recent plan review, compared to **60%** at their first review.
- **57%** of parents and carers felt the NDIS had improved their child’s relationship with family and friends at their most recent plan review, compared with **48%** at their first review.

For young adults aged 15 to 24 years:

- **48%** of participants felt that their involvement with the NDIS improved their health and wellbeing at their most recent plan review, compared to **64%** at their first review.
- **69%** of participants said the NDIS had helped them with daily living activities at their most recent plan review, compared to **61%** at their first review.

For adults aged 25 and over:

- **58%** of participants felt that their involvement with the NDIS improved their health and wellbeing at their most recent plan review, compared to **51%** at their first review.
- **82%** of participants said the NDIS had helped them with daily living activities at their most recent plan review, compared to **71%** at their first review.

²³ This section is based on responses provided at the first participant plan review, compared with those from the most recent plan review for participants who have been in the Scheme for at least two years. Trial participants are excluded.

Part Two: Participant experience and outcomes

Significant improvements in outcomes are evident the longer a participant has been in the Scheme. Highlights, for participants who have been in the scheme for at least four years, include:

Figure 26: For children aged 0 to before starting school

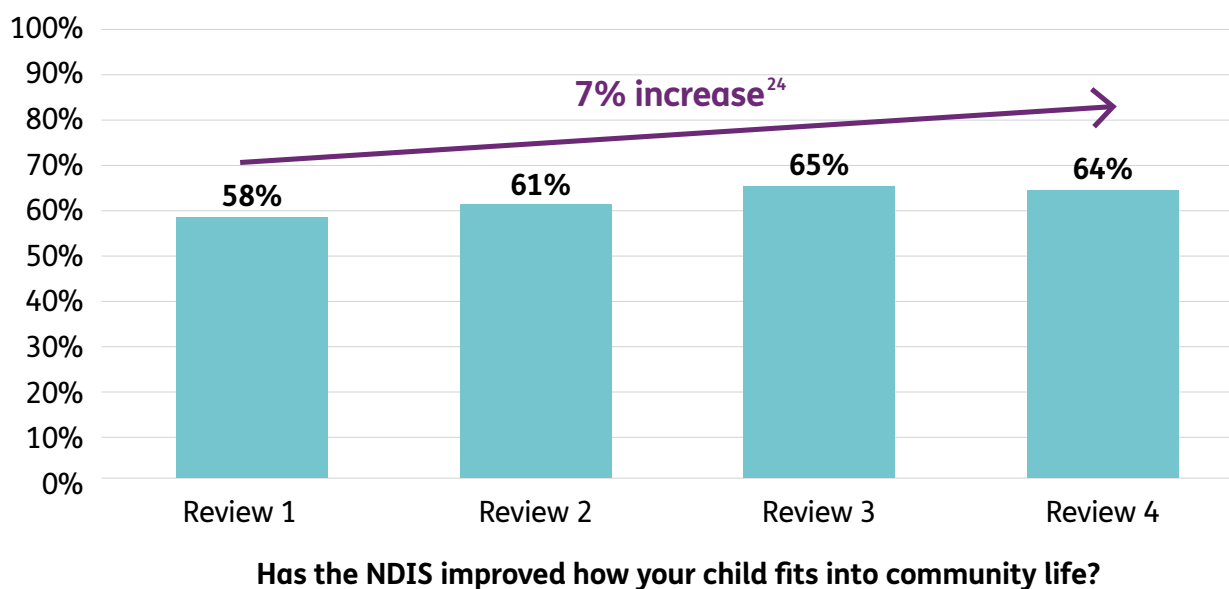
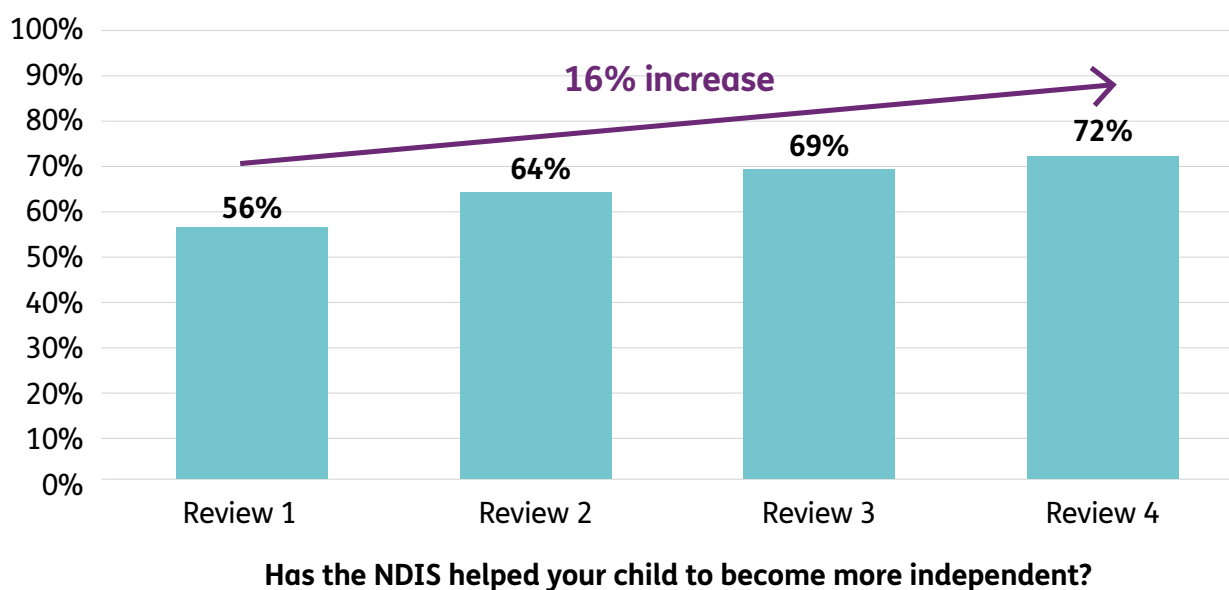


Figure 27: For children starting school to 14 years



²⁴ The Review 1 result was 57.6% and the Review 4 result was 64.4%, and increase of 6.8%.

Figure 28: For young adults aged 15 to 24

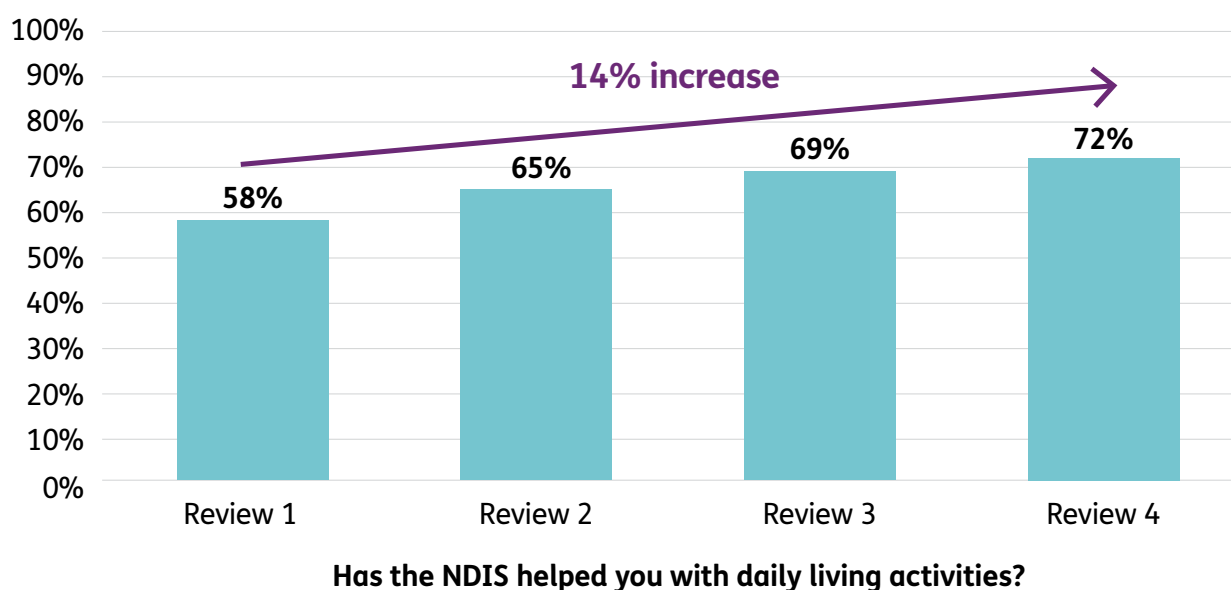
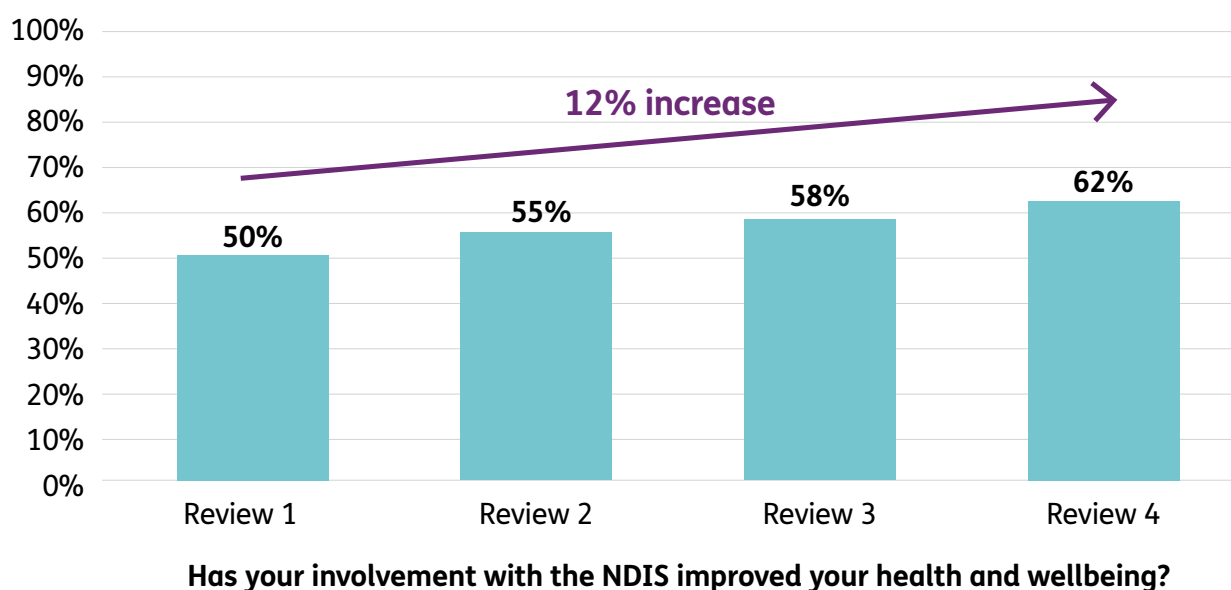


Figure 29: For adults aged 25 and over



While the above results are encouraging, the analysis also indicates that there are areas where outcomes could be improved. For example, after at least four years in the Scheme, only 15 per cent of participants aged 15 to 24 at their most recent plan review agreed that being in the NDIS had helped them find a suitable job, compared to 17 per cent at their first plan review. Similarly for participants aged 25 and over, after at least four years in the Scheme, only 19 per cent agreed that being in the NDIS had helped them find a suitable job, compared to 21 per cent at their first plan review. The NDIA is actively working to improve participation in work, as discussed earlier in this section.

2.4 Participant satisfaction

The NDIA has undertaken improvements in the way satisfaction is measured.

In September 2018, the NDIA expanded on the original participant satisfaction survey (conducted since the start of trial) to allow for a comprehensive understanding of the participant experience at each stage in the pathway. The NDIA gathers responses at the four primary stages of the participant pathway – access, pre-planning, planning and plan review.

In the December 2020 quarter, the NDIA transferred the administration of the survey away from the National Contact Centre to another third party supplier, Australian Healthcare Associates. This was in response to the Tune review, which recommended the survey be undertaken as independently as possible from the NDIA. This change in administrator has resulted in a “break” in the time series, meaning quarterly results up to and including the September 2020 quarter, do not compare with quarterly results post this quarter (that is, the December 2020, the March 2021 and the June 2021 quarters). The June 2021 quarter results are comparable with the December 2020 and the March 2021 quarter results, and assist in understanding change over time.

Also, in line with the Tune review, the NDIA is working with the Independent Advisory Council (IAC) to build on this survey to develop a more comprehensive picture of participant satisfaction. This includes input regarding the current approach, suggested improvements to current questions, and the inclusion of extra modules.

The NDIA engaged the Council for Intellectual Disability to undertake consultation on making the surveys more accessible, including for people with complex communication needs. The NDIA has reviewed the existing questions and is in the process of making the recommended changes to make the surveys more accessible.

In the June 2021 quarter, 83 per cent of participants rated the Planning process as either good or very good, with a further 10 per cent rating the experience as neutral. Seventy-seven (77) per cent of the participants in the quarter rated the Access process as either good or very good, 77 per cent rated the Pre-Planning process as either good or very good, and 71 per cent of participants rated the plan Review process as either good or very good. These results are based on 1,156 surveys at Access, 852 at Pre-Planning, 4,913 at Planning and 12,088 at Review, which is 19,009 in total. The sample size for this quarter and the last two quarters has been at least twice the sample size of previous quarters. These improvements will allow a finer disaggregation of results so that the experience of different cohorts of participants can be analysed, and more targeted improvements to the Scheme can be made.

The NDIA has acknowledged that satisfaction with the Review process has declined in recent quarters, from 76 per cent in the December quarter, to 71 per cent in the current quarter. Work is underway to understand the reasons for the decline with a focus on improving the Review process to enhance participant satisfaction.

Figure 30: Rating of experience with the NDIS (1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021)

Overall, how was your experience with:

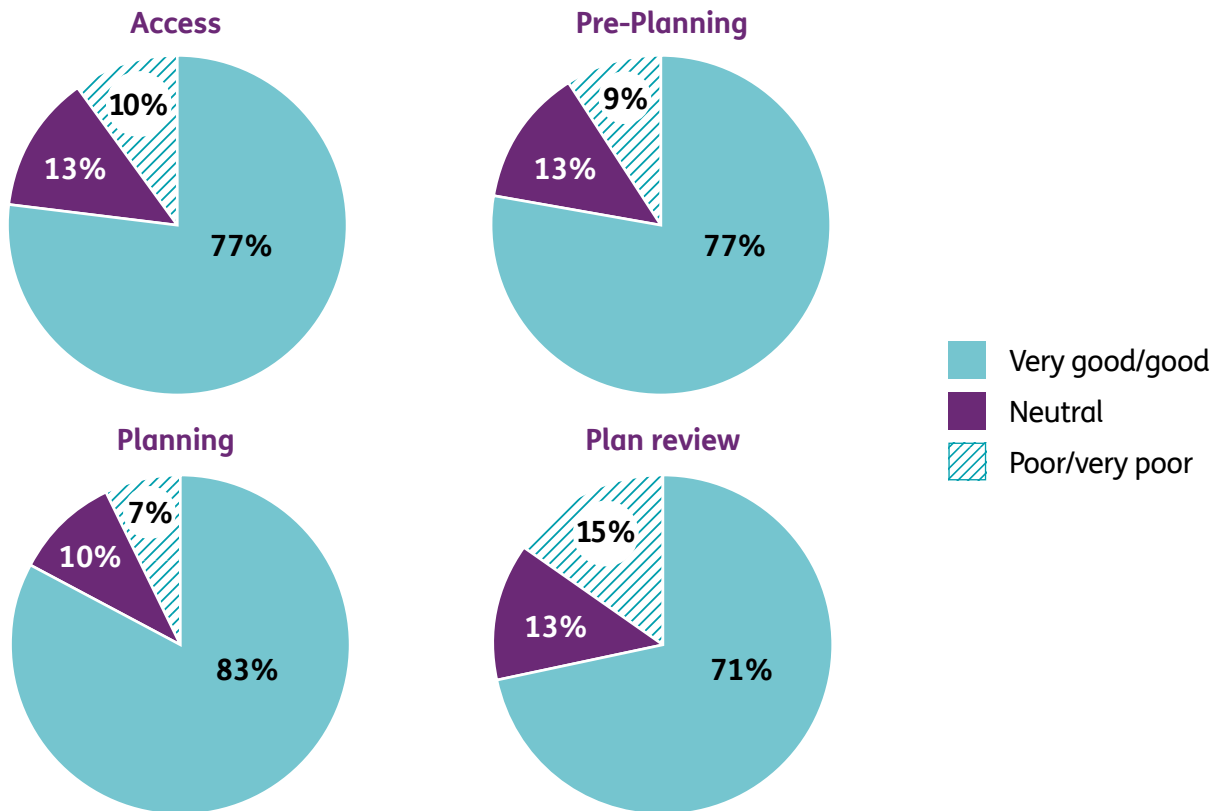
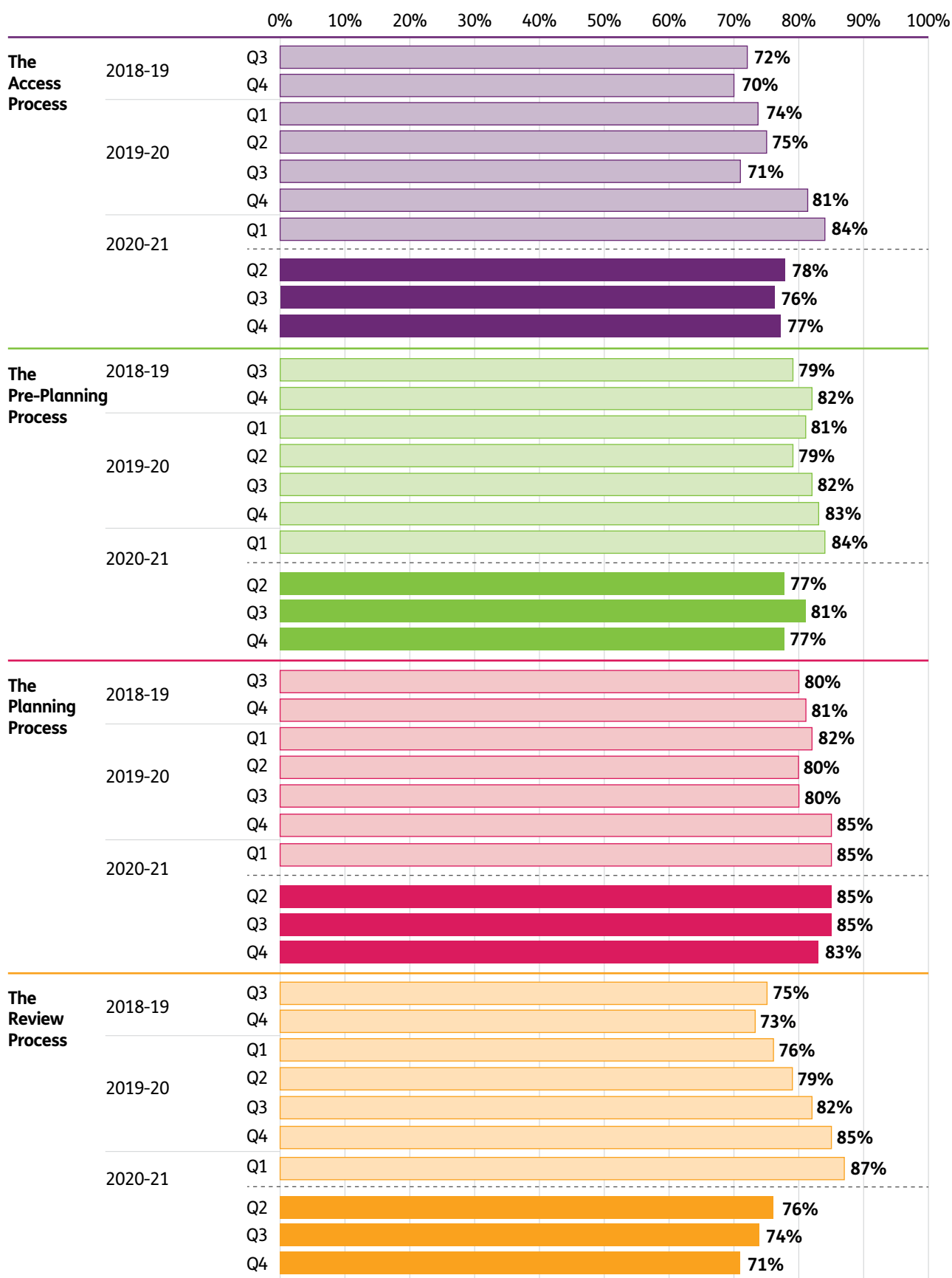


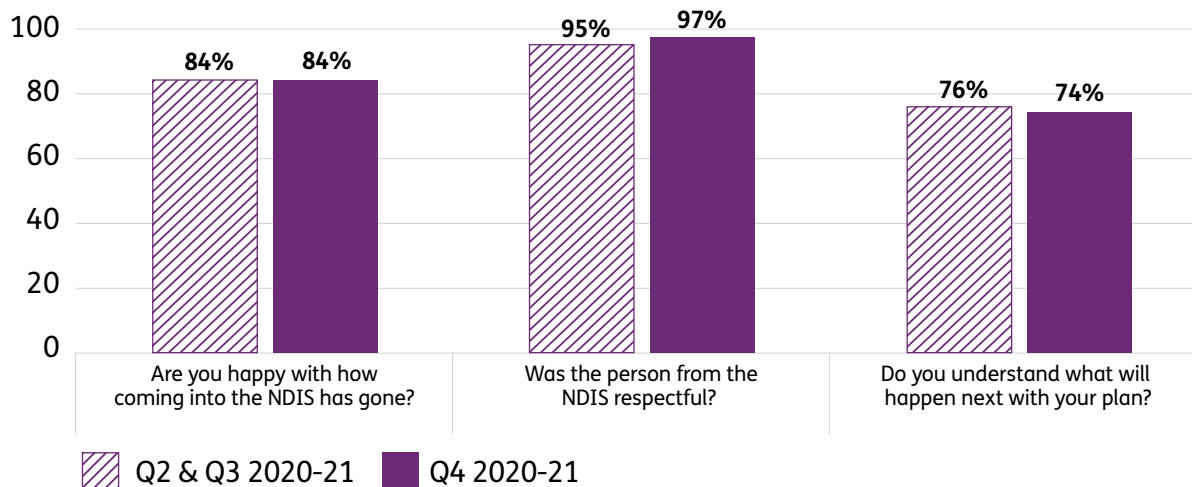
Figure 31: Trend of satisfaction across the pathway (% Very good/good)²⁵



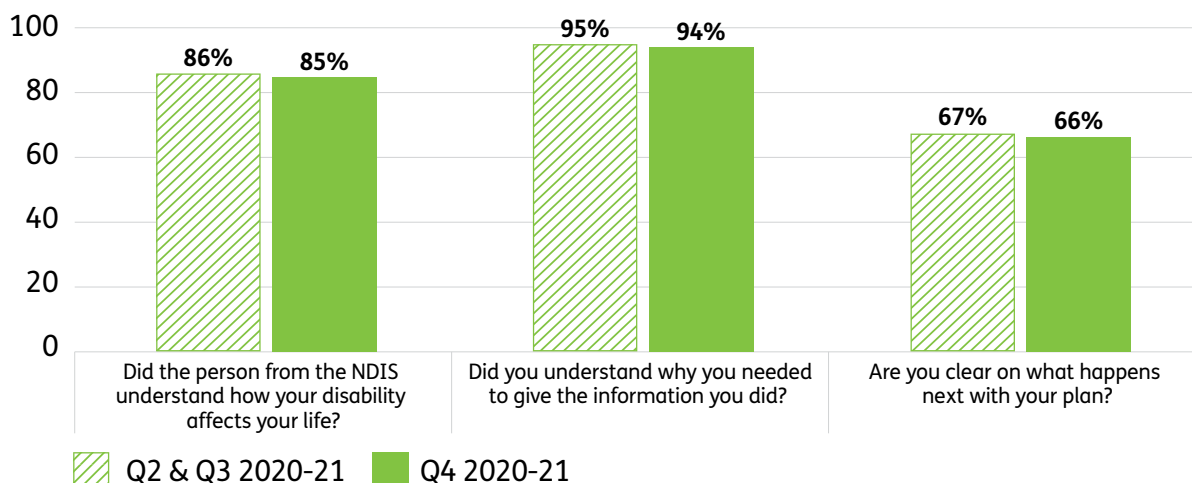
²⁵ Participant satisfaction results for prior quarters have been restated using data as at 30 June 2021 due to retrospective changes in the underlying data. These changes mainly arise from lags in data collection.

Figure 32: Satisfaction across the four stages of the pathway

Stage One: Access



Stage Two: Pre-Planning



Stage Three: Planning

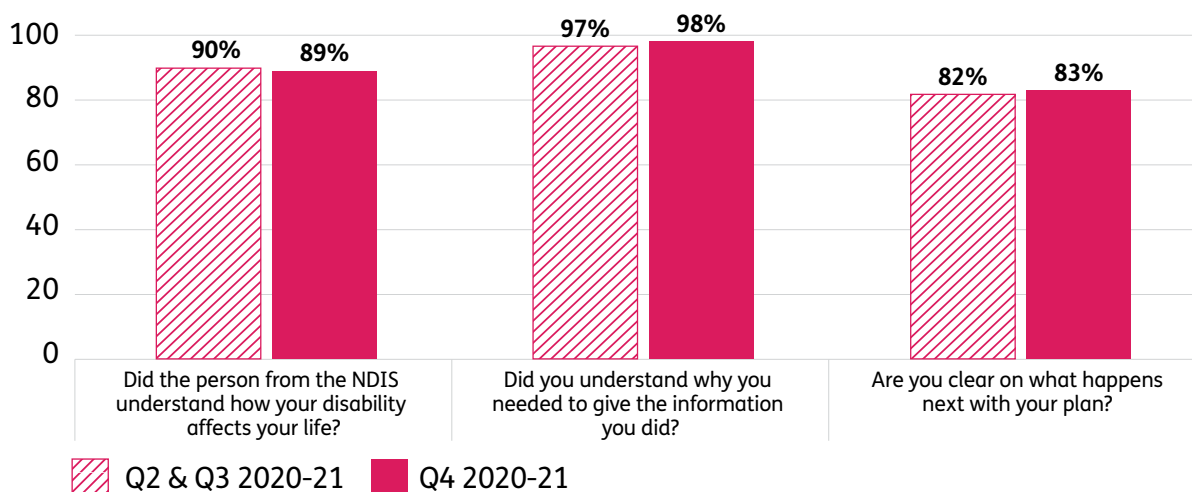
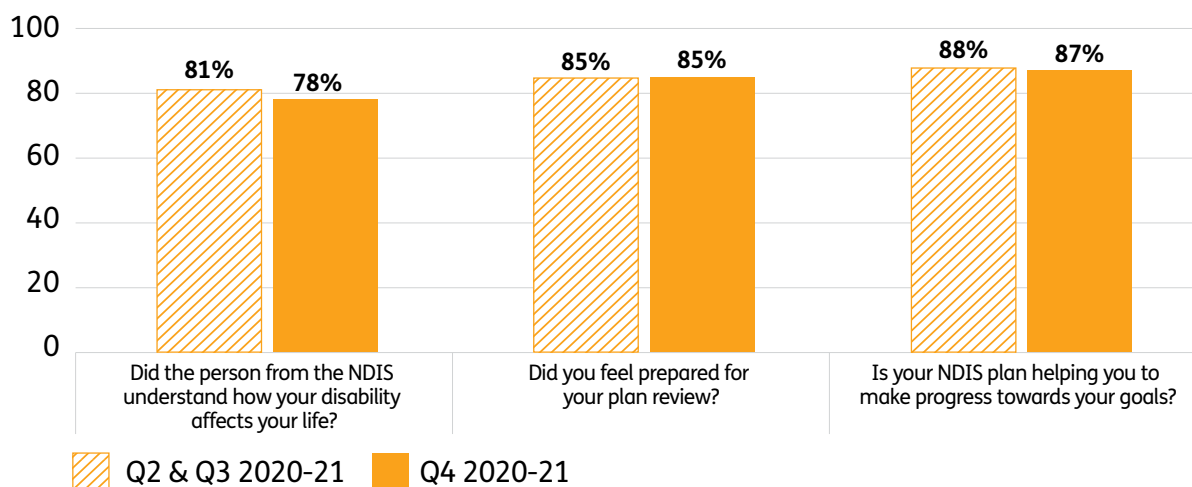


Figure 32: Satisfaction across the four stages of the pathway cont.

Stage Four: Plan Review



The surveys also include questions that provide further insights at each stage of the pathway.

The results indicate that satisfaction for Q4 2020-21, as measured by these questions, is comparable to the prior quarter.

For this quarter and historically, the percentage who have a clear understanding of what happens next with their plan in the first three steps of the participant pathway has been lower than the positive response rate for other questions. For example, at planning, 83 per cent were clear on what happens next with their plan (1 percentage higher than for prior quarter), lower than the 87-98 per cent responding positively to other questions about planning.

Participants surveyed responded very positively to questions on whether the person from the NDIS was respectful and to understanding why they needed to provide the information they did.

2.5 The NDIS Contact Centre

Performance remained high in the NDIS contact centre through the year.

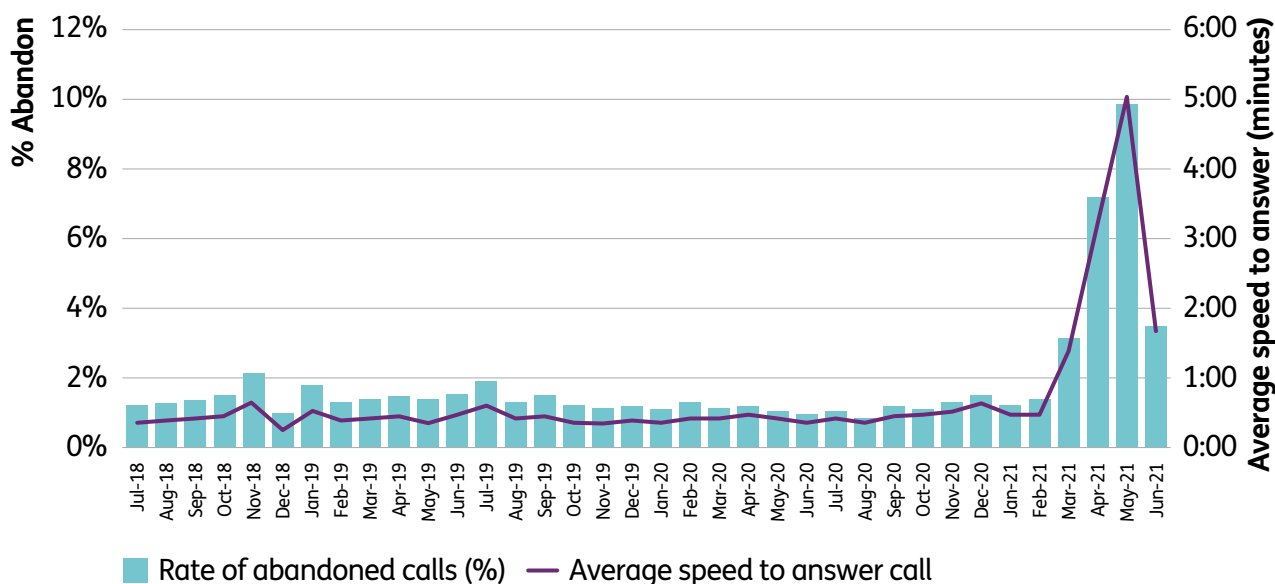
The NDIA National Contact Centre (NCC) provides personal and high quality services about the NDIS for people with disability, their family and carers, and service providers. Serco Citizen Services (Serco) have been delivering the NCC service since June 2018.

Telephony performance was consistent over the majority of the past 12 months, with increased call volumes and reduced staffing levels as the job market rebounded after COVID-19 impacting results from March to June 2021. Although there was a decrease in speed to answer, customer satisfaction results were maintained above 84 per cent across the March to June 2021 period. In response, significant recruitment and on boarding of new staff has been completed during May and June, leading to improved results in the last month of the quarter.

During the year, NCC staff were successfully deployed to remote working in response to COVID-19 impacts. There were minimal impacts to services during these periods. Under the contract with Serco, services are delivered for the NDIA according to an agreed performance framework. The performance framework includes a grade of service of 80 per cent of calls answered within 60 seconds and email enquiries progressed within two business days. Across the 12 month period NCC answered approximately 1.07 million calls, with 70 per cent answered within 60 seconds. An average speed of answer of 1 minute and 18 seconds was achieved across the 2020-21 financial year.

Customer experience ratings were consistently strong, with approximately 85 per cent of post call survey respondents scoring their experience with the NCC as 'High' or 'Very High' throughout the 12 months.

Figure 33: Telephony performance since transition to Serco as the Contact Centre service provider





Artificial vision device gives Daniel greater independence

Magnetic Island resident **Daniel** says he is living a more independent life after he secured NDIS funding to purchase an Orcam – a wearable assistive technology device, which reads text, recognises faces and identifies products.

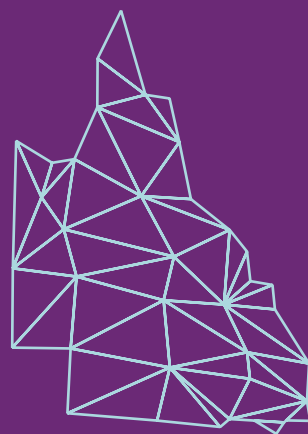
The 28-year-old, who has low vision, epilepsy, diabetes, and who is in remission after a brain tumour, said the Orcam device has built-in facial recognition, which he loves.

“The Orcam looks like an ordinary pair of glasses,” Daniel said. “They are just clear lenses but in the arm there’s a built in camera so when someone stands in front of me, and they say who they are, I can take a photo. Then when they stand in front of me again, it tells me who they are.”

Daniel said he also uses the Orcam to take images of any text he directs the device to and it will read it out to him.

Daniel’s mum Cheryl said state-of-the-art assistive technology has certainly been “life-changing” for her son. “Now he is much more confident and independent,” she said proudly. “I’ve noticed a huge difference in him.”

An NDIS participant since the scheme rolled out in Townsville, in 2016, Cheryl said Daniel has become a confident advocate for people with disability, and now he has the Orcam, he is looking forward to achieving more NDIS goals, in particular, becoming a clown doctor and writing a book.



Part Three:

Participant Service Guarantee and Participant Service Improvement Plan



Part Three:

Participant Service Guarantee and Participant Service Improvement Plan

The NDIA is committed to improving service for NDIS participants. That is why the NDIA introduced a Participant Service Charter to explain what participants can expect when they deal with the NDIA, and the Participant Service Improvement Plan that outlines all the improvements the NDIA will make.

The NDIA **Participant Service Charter** sets out what participants can expect from the NDIA and Partners in the Community (PiTC) organisations. It provides overall principles for interactions with participants, and clear service standards and timeframes. These are included in the proposed **Participant Service Guarantee**, which has been implemented early.

The Participant Service Charter is also underpinned by the specific tangible actions listed in the **Participant Service Improvement Plan**.

The Participant Service Improvement Plan is being updated to reflect the decision of disability ministers not to go ahead with independent assessments.

This section provides an update on progress against the Participant Service Guarantee and the Participant Service Improvement Plan.

3.1 Participant Service Charter

Our engagement principles guide our service delivery.

The **Participant Service Charter** is based on five principles for engagement with participants.

Engagement Principle	What you can expect
Transparent	We will make it easy to access and understand our information and decisions.
Responsive	We will respond to individual needs and circumstances.
Respectful	We will recognise your individual experience and acknowledge you are an expert in your own life.
Empowering	We will make it easy to access information and be supported by the NDIS to lead your life.
Connected	We will support you to access the services and supports you need.

The following table outlines some of the activities underway, aligned to each of the ‘what you can expect’ statements in the Participant Service Charter. A number of the activities form part of the **Participant Service Improvement Plan (SIP)**. Whilst the list is not exhaustive, the NDIA is constantly looking for opportunities to improve our participant service in line with the Engagement Principles.

Engagement Principle	What you can expect We will:	What activities are happening?
Transparent We will make it easy to access and understand our information and decisions.	Keep you informed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publishing refreshed Operational Guidelines (OGs) on the NDIS website. A new webpage has been set up that contains the new guidelines. • Released the Conversation Style Guide - a resource for service delivery staff to support them with dynamic conversations with participants and their representatives. • Released the CEO direction on 1 February 2021 to staff which includes the provision of an ‘explanation of a decision’ letter. • SIP - The NDIS Contact Centre will give you more helpful and consistent information (Complete) • SIP - You will be able to track where your application or inquiry is up to online (December 2021) • SIP - We will be clearer on what reasonable and necessary supports means, with case studies and examples (December 2021) • SIP - We will have clearer guidelines and procedures so there is consistency in how we make decisions; and we will make more of these public (December 2021) • SIP - We will put the name of an NDIS contact person on our letters to you (Complete)

Engagement Principle	What you can expect We will:	What activities are happening?
Transparent We will make it easy to access and understand our information and decisions.	Communicate in your preferred format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NDIS Application form / New Access Request form (ARF) was re-designed to include links to the Charter and PSG. This also includes a 'Contact method' section and provides a list of contact options for the participant to choose from. The NDIA has a Standard Operating Procedure to 'assist the participant with their preferred method of communication'. This is available to all National delivery staff. Within the MyPlace Portal (Participant Portal) a participant is able to update their preferred contact methods within the 'How Can NDIA contact me?' section.
	Explain the decisions we make and your appeal rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Participant Service Charter provides options for your appeal rights. Updated letters to ensure there is an explanation of a decision which is communicated in a participants preferred format and written in plain English. Letters provide information about a participants appeal rights. Released the CEO direction on 1 February 2021 which strengthens NDIA decisions, including how we document and explain decisions. 'Review of Decisions' Operational Guideline is available on the NDIS website. SIP – Our decision letters will have reasons for why we have decided something in plain English (Complete) SIP – You will get plan summary statements and draft plans before your plan is approved so you can check your information is right and there are no surprises (December 2021)
	Make sure we have answers to your questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Via the MyPlace Portal, a participant can do the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> View and update your contact details; View your NDIS Plan, including information about your funded supports; View and manage your current plan budget; Request payment for self-managed supports; Search and locate registered service providers; Create and manage service bookings with registered service providers; Manage your consent to share all or part of your plan with service providers; Upload and view documents; Print your plan; View the Planning Support Booklets; and myGov Inbox The National Contact Centre (NCC) is available for all prospective participant and participants to contact and enquire. All NCC staff have access to the NCC Knowledge Management Portal.

Engagement Principle	What you can expect We will:	What activities are happening?
Responsive We will respond to individual needs and circumstances	Make quality decisions in line with the Participant Service Guarantee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant Experience Delivery (PED) KPIs Pathway to Green Project outlines the approach to meet all of the PSG timeframes The New Starter Induction Program Internal Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) include a link to the PSG and a reminder to check the PSG timelines relevant to the process, and reinforce to staff the importance of our timeframes Continuous Improvement (CI-Connect). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusion of the Charter in the CI-Connect approach to support staff uplift 'customer/participant' service delivery capabilities and micro-skills relevant to the Charter engagement principles and accountability to deliver on commitments. The Quality assurance process is used to identify gaps in service delivery and decisions making, which informs the targeted approach for the ongoing CI Connect training. As the Agency has developed and reviewed methodologies for each PSG timeframe, PiTC have received refresher training and had input into continuous improvements for ongoing monitoring and improvement. PiTC have received regular communications and resources relating to the Charter and PSG to embed these within their practices.
	Provide you with a staff member to contact so you only need to tell us information once	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a 'Guide to interactions in the NDIS Business System' which instructs staff on how to record interactions so the participant only has to explain their story once. Within the MyPlace Portal the contact details of your NDIS contact are listed. The NDIS Application form / New Access Request form (ARF) was re-designed to include links to the Charter and PSG. This also includes a 'Contact method' section and provides a list of contact options for the participant to choose from. SIP - We will put the name of an NDIS contact person on our letters to you (Complete) SIP - You will have a current contact name for all your interactions with us (Complete)
	Provide you with options so that when your circumstances change, we can work together to find an appropriate solution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within the generic letter template, there is a section called 'Have your circumstances changed?' with several options to contact the NDIA including both email addresses and contact phone numbers. The Participant Check in process is available to connect with participants, check on their wellbeing and make sure their NDIS supports meet their needs. Via the Myplace Portal, a participant can update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact details About me Address details Bank details

Part Three: Participant Service Guarantee and Participant Service Improvement Plan

Engagement Principle	What you can expect We will:	What activities are happening?
Responsive We will respond to individual needs and circumstances	Provide you with options so that when your circumstances change, we can work together to find an appropriate solution (cont.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SIP - Your plan will be longer and ongoing. It will be reviewed when you or we request it – for example, if your circumstances change or something significant happens in your life (Complete) • SIP - We will process applications for all supports associated with housing and accommodation issues together and more quickly (Complete) • SIP - We will improve our direct support for you if you have complex needs and require critical supports, or are otherwise potentially vulnerable (June 2022) • SIP - We will fund early intervention supports for children more flexibly (June 2022)
Respectful We will recognise your individual experience and acknowledge you are an expert in your own life.	Listen to you so we can understand your experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversation Style Guide provides instruction to staff on how to engage with participant so we understand the participant experience. • SIP - If you want, you will be able to have a face-to-face meeting with the person who makes a decision about your plan supports and funding (December 2021)
	Work together so the NDIS can support you within the requirements of the Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasonable and necessary justification training is delivered to staff • Staff are provided training through the New Starter Program and Corporate Induction training program. • Publishing refreshed Operational Guidelines on the NDIS website. A new webpage has been set up that contains the new guidelines. • CEO Direction specifies requirements for staff must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Follow relevant OGS, include regard to KPIs – Follow SOPs – Determine R&N supports in line with s34 of the Act – Record and document reason for decisions – Provide an 'Explanation of decision' letter • SIP - We will check-in with you on how the plan is going, and whether an update or review is needed (Complete) • SIP - We will support you, if you want, to build goals in your plan that are clearly designed, realistic and attainable (June 2022)
	Make sure our staff are trained to understand the impact of different disabilities on people's lives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff are provided training through the New Starter Program and Corporate Induction training program. • All front-line staff access Disability Awareness, Celebrating Diversity and Multicultural Awareness training, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Awareness and LGBTIQ + inclusion training. They also have access to online resources including the Disability Navigator which provide greater insight into the impact of different disabilities on people's lives. • Where staff may need additional advice they can access support through the NDIA's Technical Advisory Branch. The Technical Advisory Branch provides specialist advice within their areas of expertise. This includes managing a hotline for staff to contact. • SIP - Our front-line teams will have improved cultural and disability awareness (Complete)

Engagement Principle	What you can expect We will:	What activities are happening?
Respectful We will recognise your individual experience and acknowledge you are an expert in your own life.	Listen to your feedback and use this to find better ways of doing things	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NDIA has several different channels to capture participant feedback and incorporate this into improved service to our participants. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use complaints data to inform continuous improvement. Further detail is available in the original response under Question 21. Undertake a Participant First initiative. This engagement initiative will get direct feedback from participants, their families and carers on the best ways to improve our approach. It's all part of the Participant First Engagement Initiative, which sees us listening to participants about the best ways to improve our approach. Participant Reference Group (PRG). The PRG provides strategic insights from a participants' perspective into policy, process and system development and review, supporting continuous service improvement of the NDIS. The PRG consists of 20 participants and carers from across Australia, representing the disability experiences of our broader participant cohort. The NDIA is conducting an open consultation process and encourages participants and the public to have their say. Open submissions/consultation papers are published on the 'Have your say' section of the website. As mentioned earlier in this report, the NDIA is committed to continued engagement with the sector on issues facing the Scheme.
Empowering We will make it easy to access information and be supported by the NDIS to lead your life.	Make our processes simple and easy to use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NDIS website has been updated for ease of use and is fully accessible. The NDIA is working on replacing the MyPlace Portal to make it easier to use for participants, in addition we are introducing an 'NDIS' mobile app. The NDIS mobile app will make it convenient for participants to use their NDIS plan and connect with the NDIS. The NDIS Application form / New Access Request form (ARF) was re-designed to include links to the Charter and PSG. It was tested by participants through the Participant First initiative to review options for the form format available, ensuring accessibility. SIP - The website and portal will be clearer and easier to use (December 2021) SIP - We're working to build more do-it-yourself online plan tools (June 2022) SIP - You will be able to manage your plan more easily, using a new NDIS mobile app (December 2021) SIP - We will have clearer guidelines and procedures so there is consistency in how we make decision and we will make more of these public (December 2021) SIP - There will be a standard form and application process for SDA (Complete) SIP - You will be able to quickly access assistive technology and home modifications with less red tape. This includes a simpler process for requesting complex and non-standard assistive technology or home modifications (Complete).

Engagement Principle	What you can expect We will:	What activities are happening?
Empowering We will make it easy to access information and be supported by the NDIS to lead your life.	Update our information so it's easier to understand and useful when making decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Operational Guidelines are made public so that staff (including PiTC) and participants have access to the same, single point of truth about how decisions are made about NDIS eligibility and NDIS plans. This incorporates information about PSG timelines. When OGs are published there is an internal and external communications strategy, with key messages for participants and staff about the 'why' and 'what' we are publishing. • The NDIA has overhauled the language in guidance material to make OGs more personal and human with less jargon, which reinforces the respectful and empowering principles as it's more appropriate to the intended audience. • To support the internal and external communications, the NDIA is communicating the PSG timeframes in refreshed OGs and staff SOPs including providing links to the PSG on the NDIS website. • SIP - Our guidelines will come with plain English descriptions and more examples (December 2021) • SIP - We will be clearer on what reasonable and necessary supports means, with case studies and examples (December 2021) • SIP - Our documents will use consistent terms and definitions with less jargon (June 2022) • SIP - We will issue new easy-to-understand guidelines for complex home modifications (Complete).
	Inform you of your rights with the NDIS or providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Participant Service Charter provides further information 'If you do not agree with a decision we have made' or 'If you are unhappy with the outcome of a decision review' • 'Review of Decisions' OG which is available on the NDIS website. • Letters provide information about a participants appeal rights. • SIP - You will be able to access your personal data and plan details without having to ask through a Freedom of Information (FOI) request (Complete)

Engagement Principle	What you can expect We will:	What activities are happening?
Empowering We will make it easy to access information and be supported by the NDIS to lead your life.	Support and promote your voice so you have control of your plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NDIA support participants during planning conversation to ensure that their voice is heard and understood. SIP - There will be a simple and quick process when you need to make minor changes to your plan – it won't require a full "review" (Complete) SIP - We will make it easier to self-manage your plan, with the right support and controls in place; and to change easily between plan and self-managed (June 2022) SIP - We will check in with you on how the plan is going, and whether an update or review is needed – (December 2021) SIP - We will focus on your plan and goals supporting you to gain employment if that is what you want (June 2022) SIP - We will encourage Individualised Living Options as an alternative to traditional group homes (June 2022) SIP - We want to support and promote children and young people's voice in their own plans; while also working closely with parents and carers (June 2022) SIP - We will improve the way we provide you support for independent decision-making (June 2022) SIP - We will support you if you are a Young Person in Residential Aged Care to live elsewhere (June 2022)
	Include people with disability and the community to help us develop and test our processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NDIA has several key avenues to include people with a disability in the development and testing of our processes, these include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant First initiative Participant Reference Group 'Have your say' section in the NDIS website The NDIA is conducting an open consultation process and encourages participants and the public to have their say. Open submissions/consultation papers are published on the 'Have your say' section of the website. As mentioned earlier in this report, the NDIA is committed to continued engagement with the sector on issues facing the Scheme. The NDIA will be engaging with the sector on the design of a person-centred model. A model that will deliver consistency and equity of both access and planning outcomes. A model consistent with the assessment requirements under the NDIS Act. The Independent Advisory Council brings the views of people with a disability, carers and sector experts to the heart of the NDIS providing independent advice to the NDIA Board on the delivery of the Scheme. The CEO Forum is a key component of the NDIA's stakeholder engagement approach, where CEO's and senior representatives from key disability sector organisations engage, discuss and collaborate directly with the Agency on important areas of work relating to the operation and implementation of the NDIS.

Engagement Principle	What you can expect We will:	What activities are happening?
Connected We will support you to access the services and supports you need.	Provide options so you can choose how you connect with us	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NDIA have provided a number of methods to allow participants to choose how they connect with the NDIS. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Access request form SOP 'Assist the participant with the preferred method of communication' MyPlace Portal SIP - You will be able to use online forms and services where you want to (December 2021) SIP - You will be able to apply to the NDIS in the way you want, including using an online access request form (December 2021) SIP - We will support more video-conference planning meetings (December 2021).
	Help you to use your plan and locate supports and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your ECEI coordinator, LAC or Support coordinator can assist participants to find supports and services. In addition, the MyPlace Portal has a Provider finder which allows participants to find Providers within their local area. Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) Vacancy matching platform is available through the NDIS website. The NDIS mobile app will make it convenient for participant to use their NDIS plan and connect with the NDIS. SIP - We will make sure you are connected to other mainstream and community supports and services as well, even if you don't gain access to the NDIS (June 2022) SIP - We will give you more support for using your plan, for finding both disability services and mainstream supports (Complete) SIP - We will be clearer about support coordination services, and what you should expect (September 2021) SIP - Payments will be able to be made simply and directly for registered and non-registered providers of services – no more paying first from your own cash and claiming it back (June 2022) SIP - We will have new systems to make sure providers are paid promptly and accurately, so your support is not interrupted (June 2022) SIP - There will be a national SDA-matching website showing all available properties (Complete) SIP - We will have a NDIS carer connect network for aging parents of people with a disability (Complete) SIP - We will pro-actively check-in with you, especially if you may be in a vulnerable situation (Complete)

Engagement Principle	What you can expect We will:	What activities are happening?
Connected We will support you to access the services and supports you need.	Build community awareness and understanding of the NDIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NDIA undertakes regular Engagement activities through the Community Engagement and Events branch. The NDIA will build community capacity by being in local communities to provide targeted engagement with participants and the community. The NDIA will keep those concerned informed about the Scheme, help them to connect to mainstream services and other community supports as well as troubleshoot. SIP - We will work with communities in remote and very remote areas, and other areas lacking services, to trial new ways of organising services so you can more easily use your support funding (June 2022) SIP - We will fund specialist community connectors (CC) (in remote, culturally and linguistically diverse, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities) to deeply understand how you want to engage with us (Complete) SIP - Liaison Officers, for Health and Justice especially, will help participants interact with the NDIS in each State and Territory (Complete)

3.2 Participant Service Guarantee

The latest quarter shows consistent service standard experience across the measurable PSG metrics.

Performance against the proposed service standards – June 2021

Legislation to implement the Participant Service Charter and Guarantee has been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the NDIA has commenced measuring performance against the PSG metrics early where possible, and will expand this reporting in future quarters.

Service type	Description of the service being guaranteed	Service Guarantee	Performance in the June 2021 quarter	Comparison to target of 95%
General	Explanation of a previous decision, after a request for explanation is received	28 days	70%	■
Access	Make an access decision, or request for more information, after an access request has been received	21 days	100%	●
Access	Allow sufficient time for prospective participants to provide information, after NDIA has requested further information	90 days	99%	●
Access	Make an access decision, after the final information has been provided	14 days	99%	●
Planning	Commence facilitating the preparation of a plan, after an access decision has been made	21 days	80%	■
Planning	Approve a participant's plan, after an access decision has been made	56 days	80%	■
Planning	Approve a plan for ECEI participants, after an access decision has been made.	90 days	91%	▲
Implementation	Offer to hold a plan implementation meeting, after the plan is approved	As soon as reasonably practical	Reporting will commence in the December 2021 quarter	
Implementation	If the participant accepts the offer, hold a plan implementation meeting	28 days	100%	●

● 95% and over ▲ 85%-95% ■ Less than 85%

Part Three: Participant Service Guarantee and Participant Service Improvement Plan

Service type	Description of the service being guaranteed	Service Guarantee	Performance in the June 2021 quarter	Comparison to target of 95%
Implementation	Provide a copy of the plan to a participant, after the plan is approved	7 days	Reporting will commence in the December 2021 quarter	
Plan review	Commence facilitating a scheduled plan review, prior to the scheduled review date	56 days	28%*	■
Plan review	Decide whether to undertake a participant requested plan review, after the request is received	21 days	91%	▲
Plan review	Complete a participant requested review, after the decision to accept the request is made	42 days	72%	■
Plan variations	Vary a plan, after the receipt of information that triggers the plan amendment process	28 days	95%	●
Plan variations	Vary a plan, after receipt of information relating to a complex quote that triggers a plan amendment process	50 days	94%	▲
Plan variations	Provide a copy of the plan to a participant, after the plan is amended	7 days	Reporting will commence in the December 2021 quarter	
Reviewable decisions	Complete an internal review of a reviewable decision, after a request is received	90 days	94%	▲
Reviewable decisions	Implement an AAT decision to vary a plan, after receiving notification of the AAT decision	28 days	96%	●
Nominee	Cancel participant requested nominee	14 days	86%	▲
Nominee	Cancel CEO initiated nominee	14 days	100%	●

* Note: Plans are extended automatically so participants receive continuity of support. That is, participants do not stop receiving supports.

● 95% and over ▲ 85%-95% ■ Less than 85%

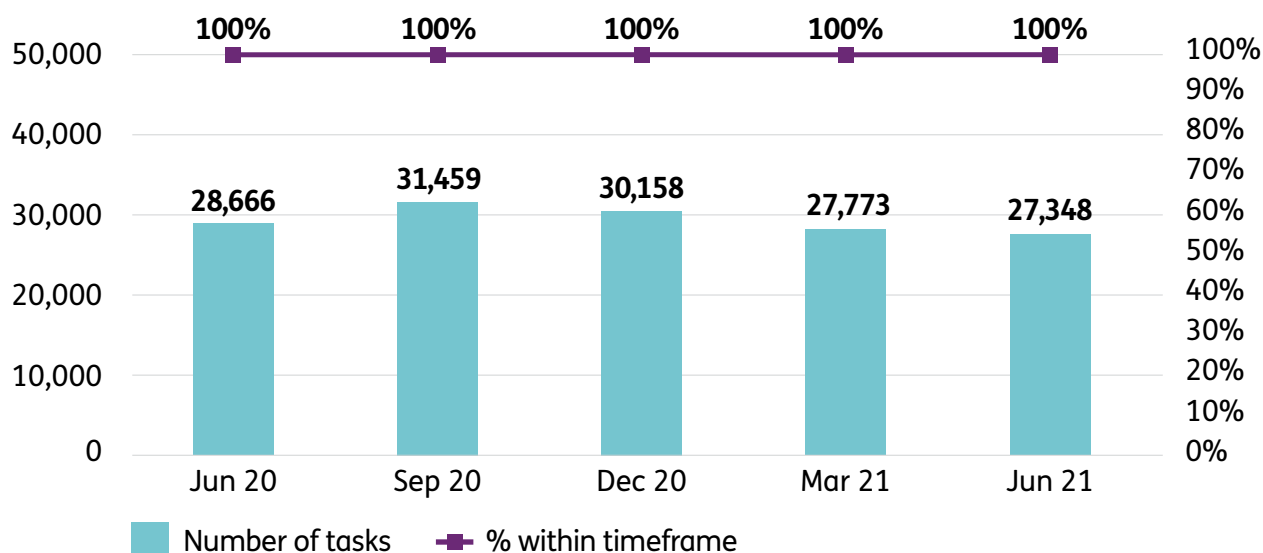
Key trends in PSG metrics

The NDIA has consistently been meeting PSG timeframes for access decisions and first plans approvals (for those aged 0-6) over the last few quarters, and there has been marked improvement compared to 2019.

Access Decisions

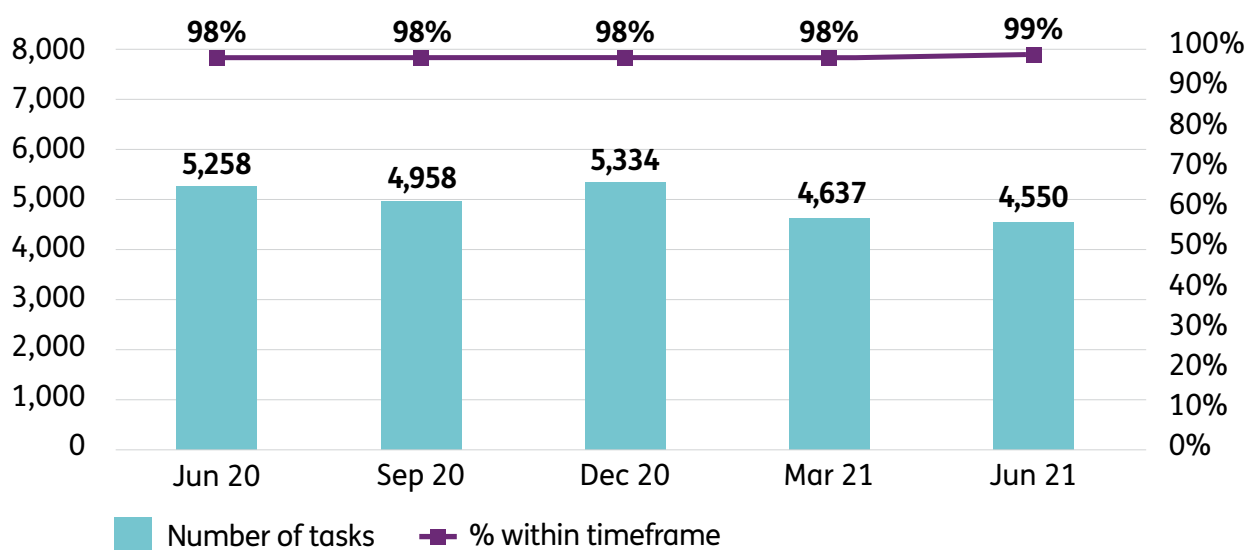
The NDIA has consistently met the 21 day timeframe in respect of access decisions over the last six quarters, which is a big improvement compared to 2019.

Figure 34: Access decision made, or further information requested, after receiving access request



The NDIA has also consistently met the 14 day timeframe in respect to making an access decision after the final information has been provided. Once again this is a big improvement from 2019, where only 63 per cent of decisions were made within the timeframe.

Figure 35: Make an access decision, after the final information has been provided²⁶



²⁶ The results for prior quarters have been restated using data as at 30 June 2021 due to a change in the way this metric is measured.

Planning

Plan approval timeframes for participants aged 0-6 have improved over the last few quarters, with 91 per cent approved within the timeframe of 90 days in the June 2021 quarter. The target timeframe for the approval of plans for those aged 7 and above has reduced from 70 days to 56 days from the March 2021 quarter and there has been a consequent reduction in service level met (80 per cent).

Figure 36: Commence facilitating the preparation of a plan, after an access decision has been made²⁷

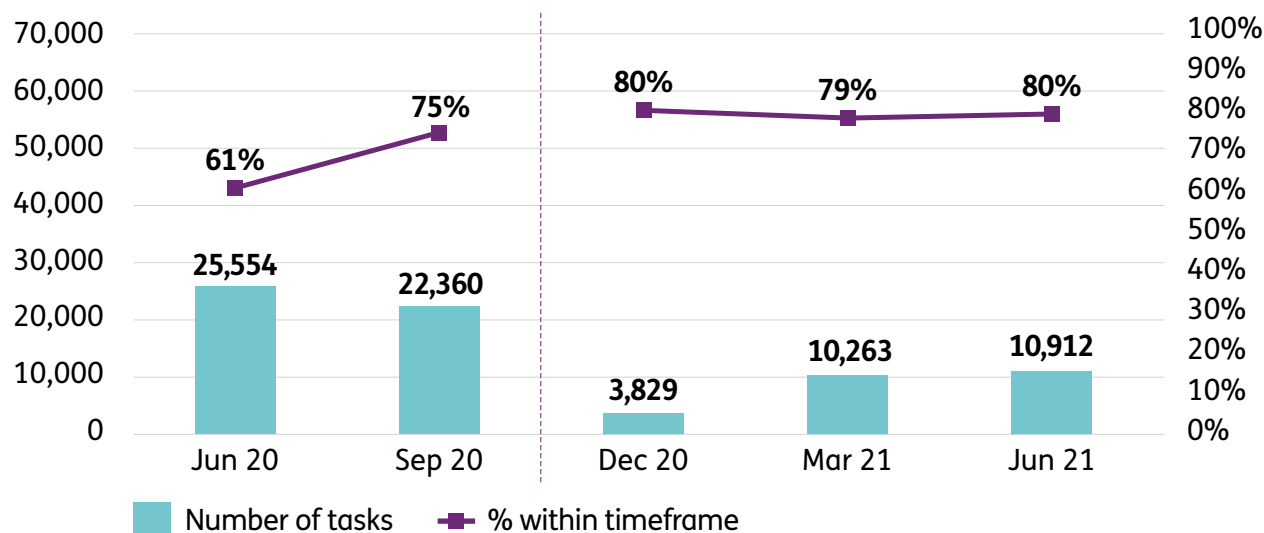
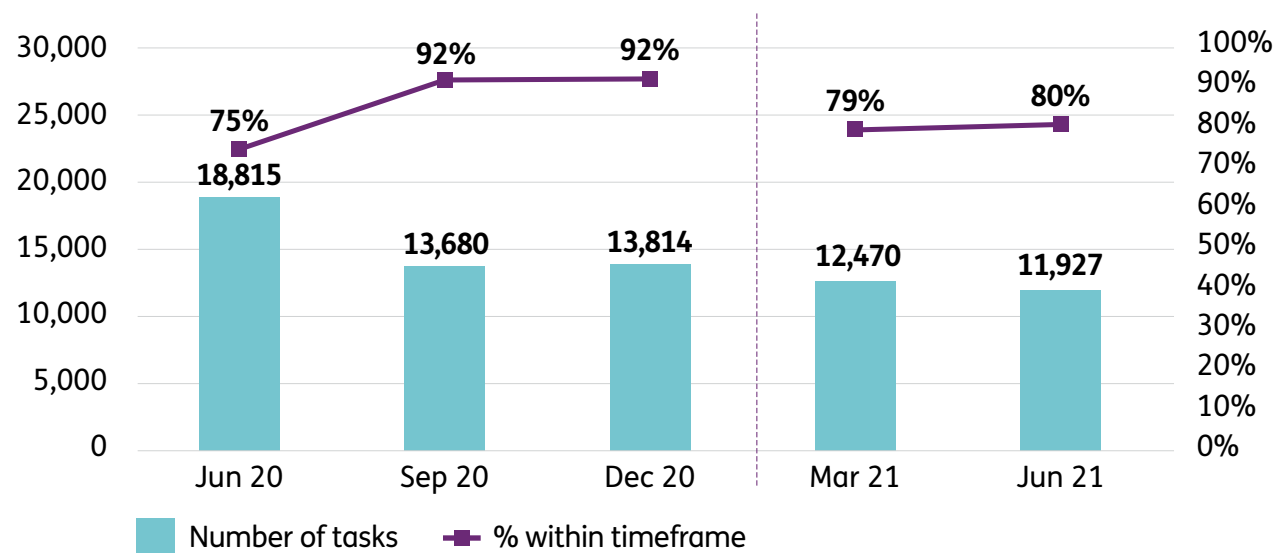


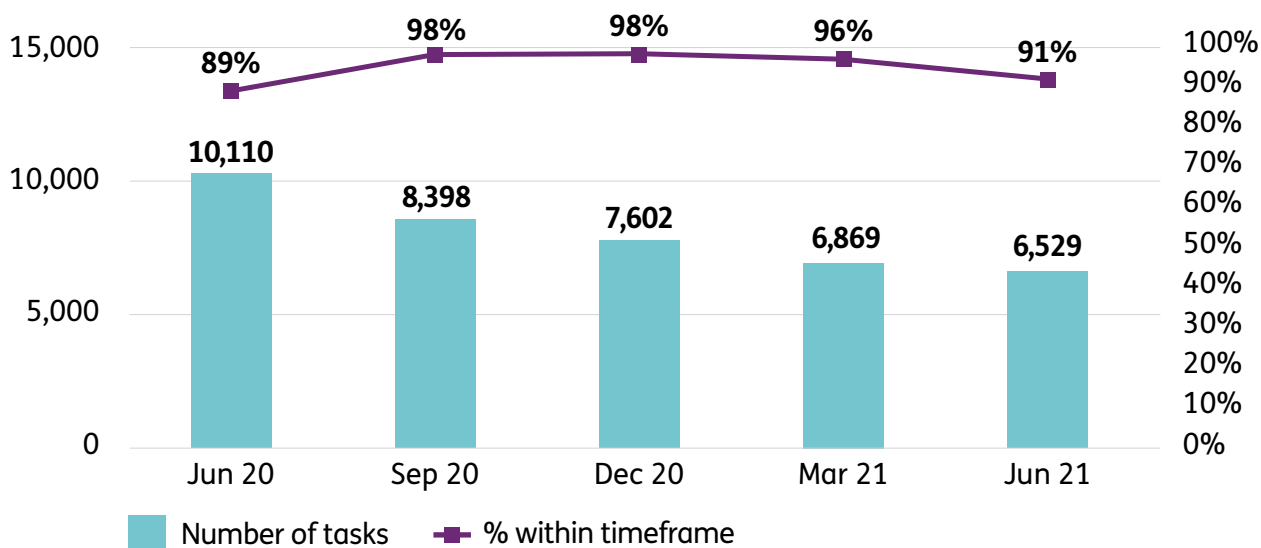
Figure 37: First plan approved after access decision has been made, 7+ years²⁸



²⁷ A new business process has been used to measure this metric since December 2020. The results subsequent to September 2020 are based on this new process.

²⁸ The target timeframe for this metric has been reduced from 70 to 56 days in early 2021. In this chart, the result for the March and June 2021 quarters is based on the 56 day timeframe while the results for prior quarters are based on the 70 day timeframe.

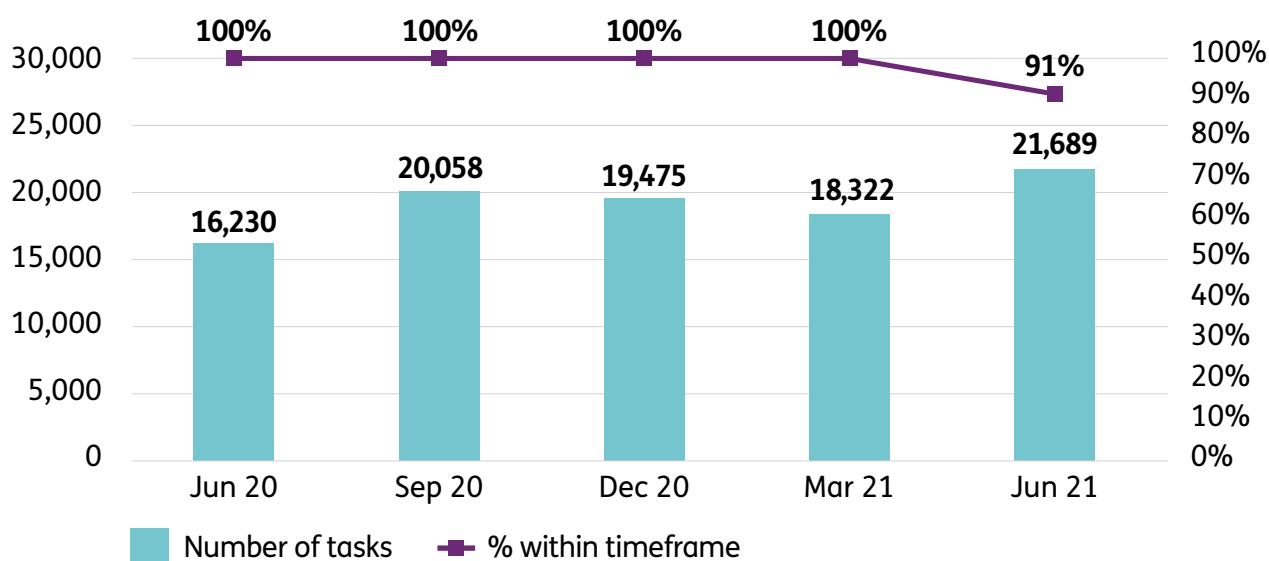
Figure 38: First plan approved after access decision has been made, 0-6 years



Plan Review

Decisions about whether or not to conduct a Participant Requested Review (PRR) were made within 21 days 91 per cent of the time in the June 2021 quarter.

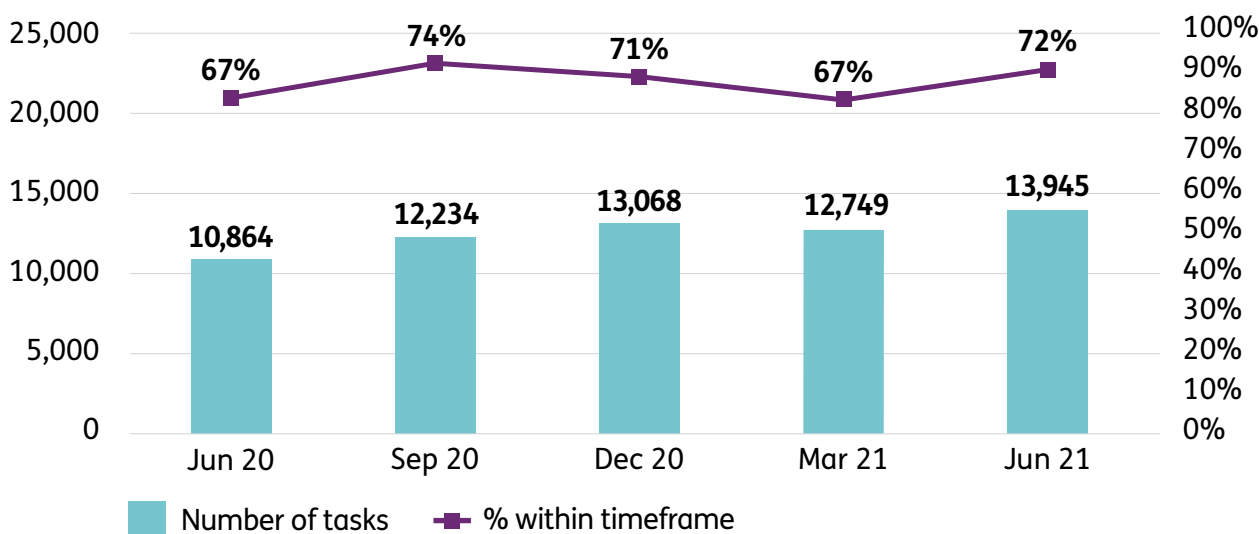
Figure 39: Decision made to undertake PRR after request is received



Part Three: Participant Service Guarantee and Participant Service Improvement Plan

PRR timeframes have remained consistent over the last few quarters, improving from 67 per cent in the June 2020 quarter to 72 per cent in the June 2021 quarter.

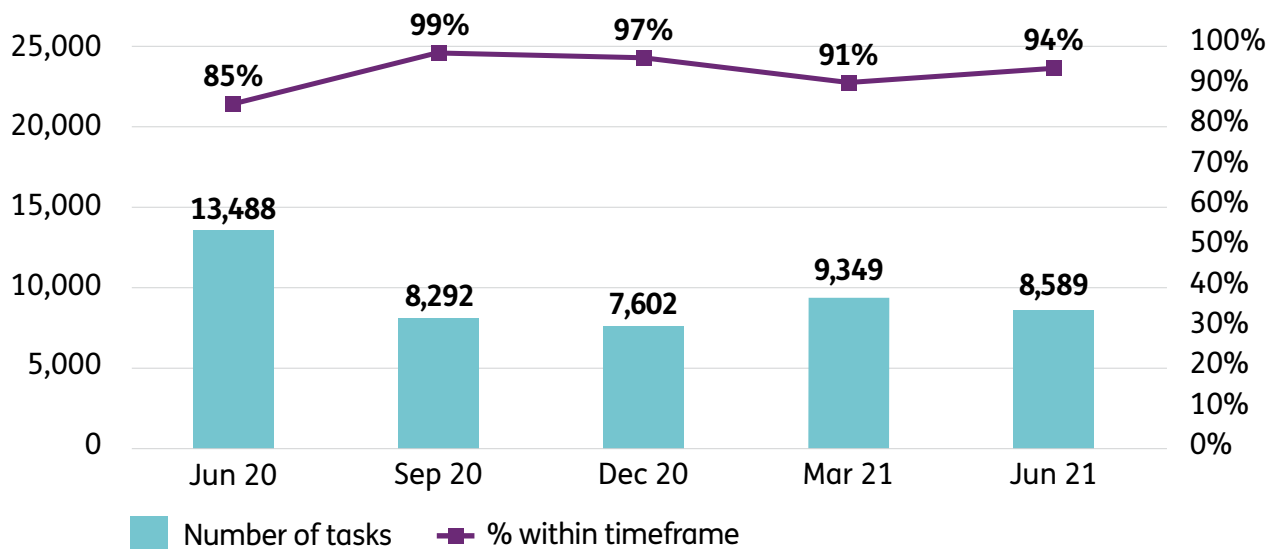
Figure 40: PRR completed after decision made to undertake review



Reviewable Decisions

In the June 2021 quarter, the NDIA was completing Reviews of Reviewable Decisions within the 90 day timeframe 94 per cent of the time.

Figure 41: Complete Review of a Reviewable Decision after request is received



Service standards for the National Contact Centre

Service type	Description of the service being guaranteed	Performance
General	Our National Contact Centre will answer 80% of calls within 60 seconds.	70% on average throughout 2020-21 (Section 2 in this report discusses further).

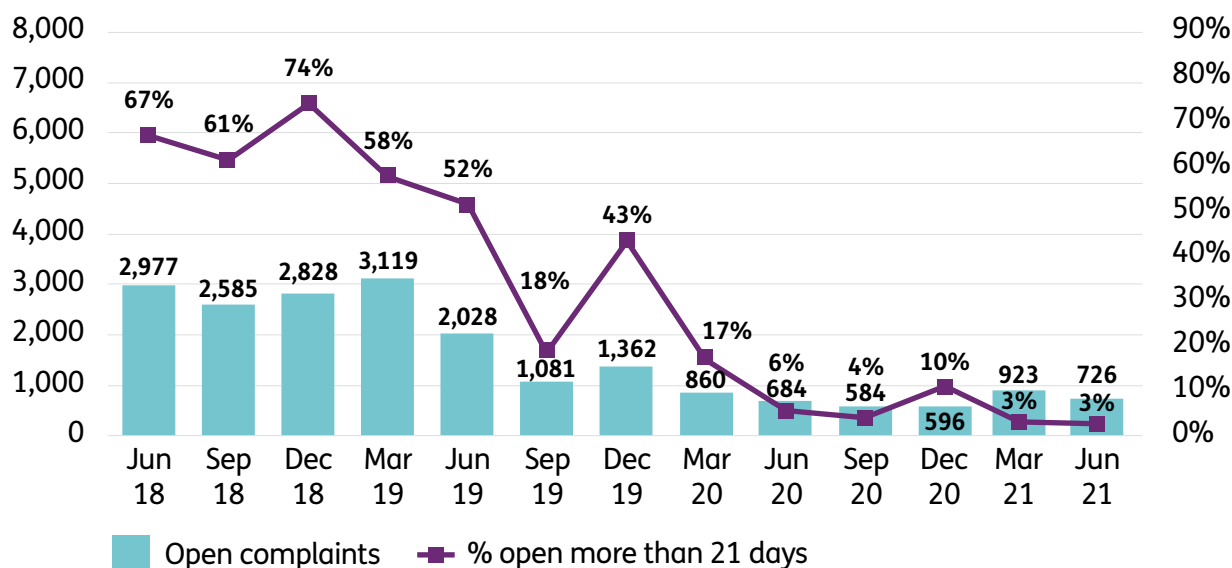
Service standards for complaints

Service type	Description of the service being guaranteed	Performance
Complaints	Resolve 90% of complaints within 21 days after we receive it. More complex complaints may take longer to address.	94% in the June 2021 quarter

Key trends in complaints

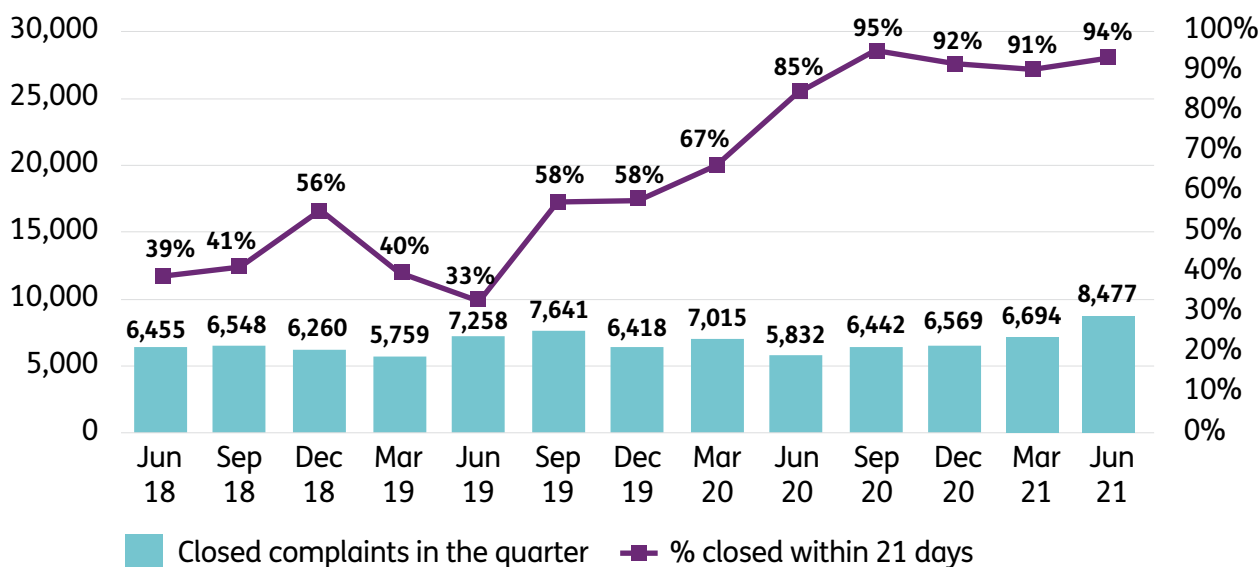
The number of open complaints decreased marginally in the June 2021 quarter and remains significantly lower than experience prior to 2020. Over recent quarters the percentage of total complaints that have been open for more than 21 days has significantly reduced – three per cent in the June 2021 quarter.

Figure 42: Open complaints and percentage that have been open for more than 21 days²⁹



Although the number of closed complaints increased in the most recent quarter, the number has been consistent over quarters despite the significant increase in participant numbers. Additionally, the percentage of complaints that have been closed within 21 days was 94 per cent in the most recent quarter, a significant improvement compared to 2019.

Figure 43: Closed complaints and per cent completed within 21 day timeframe³⁰



²⁹ The numbers of complaints reported for the most recent quarter may still increase to the extent there is a lag in data collection. However, any increase is not expected to have a material impact on the results.

³⁰ *ibid.*

Part Three: Participant Service Guarantee and Participant Service Improvement Plan

Figure 44 shows a generally consistent decline in the number of complaints received over recent quarters, as a proportion of access requests. In the most recent quarter though there was an increase with 7,493 complaints received, which is equivalent to 4.6 per cent of access requests. Additionally, the number of complaints received from providers increased during the quarter (Figure 45) with 523 complaints received which is equivalent to 5.8 per cent of registered providers making a complaint.

Figure 44: Number and proportion of participant complaints over time incrementally (top) and cumulatively (bottom) – National

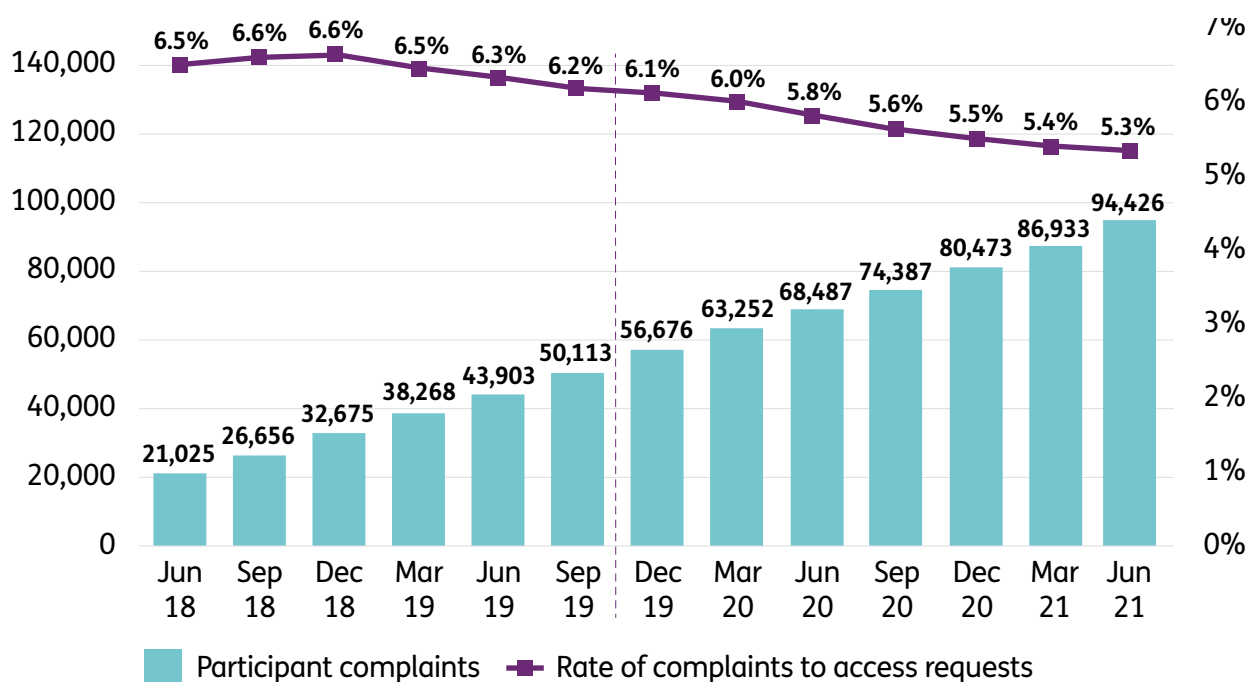
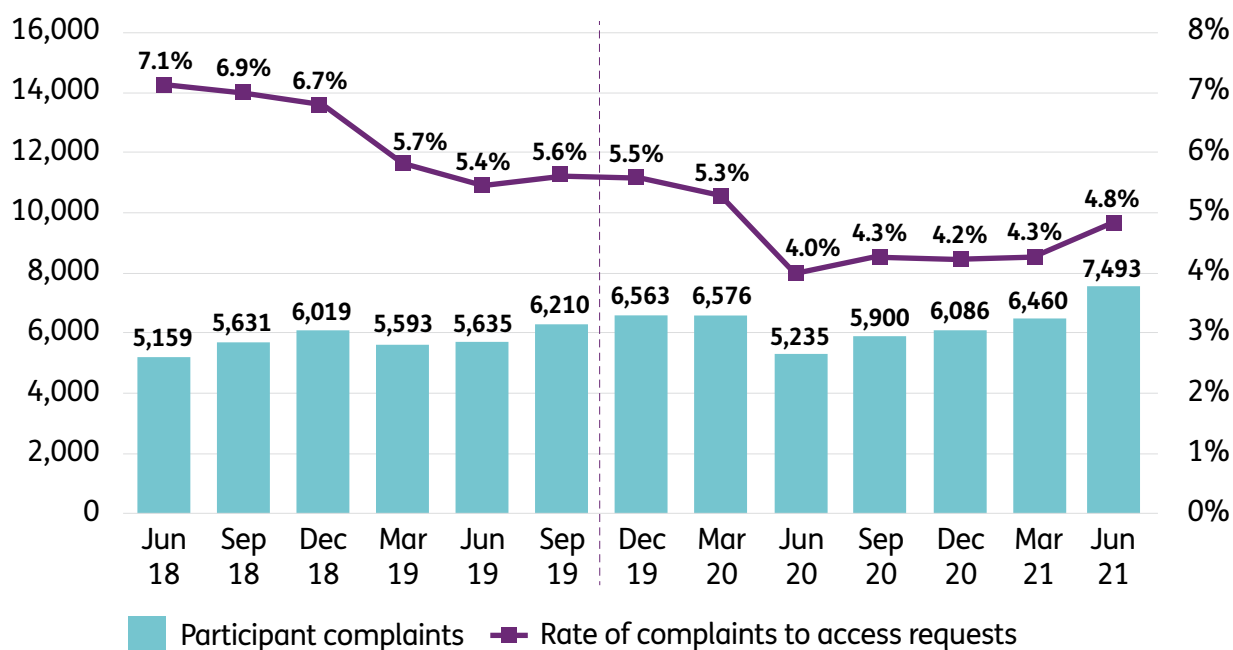
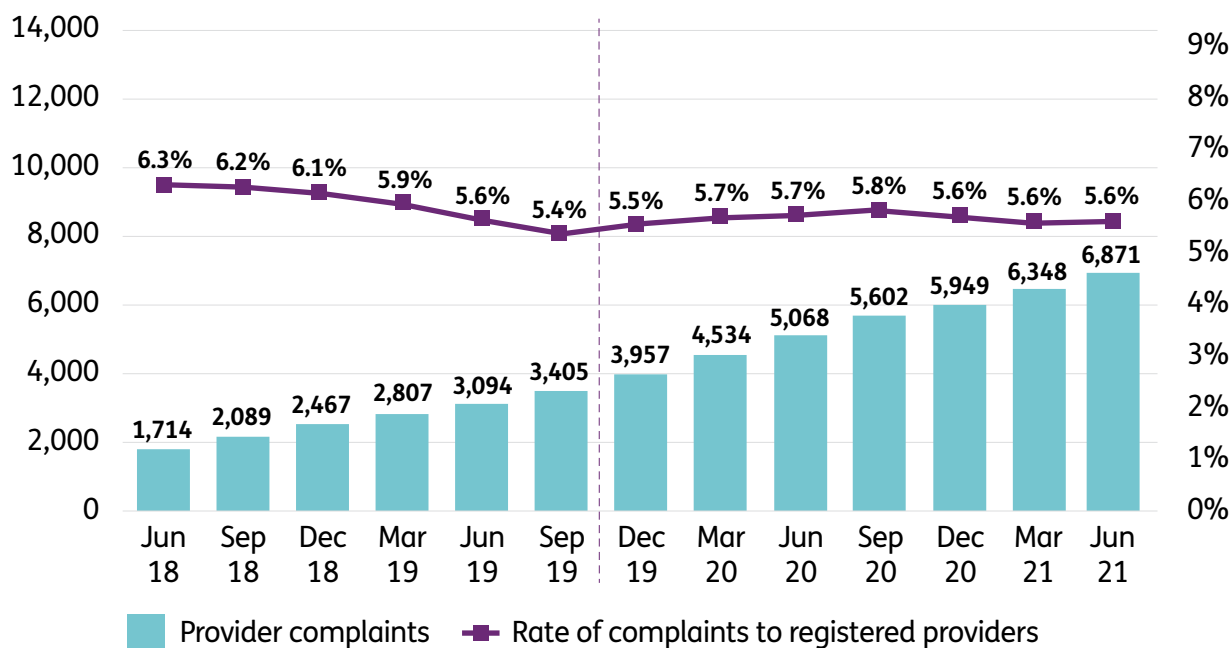
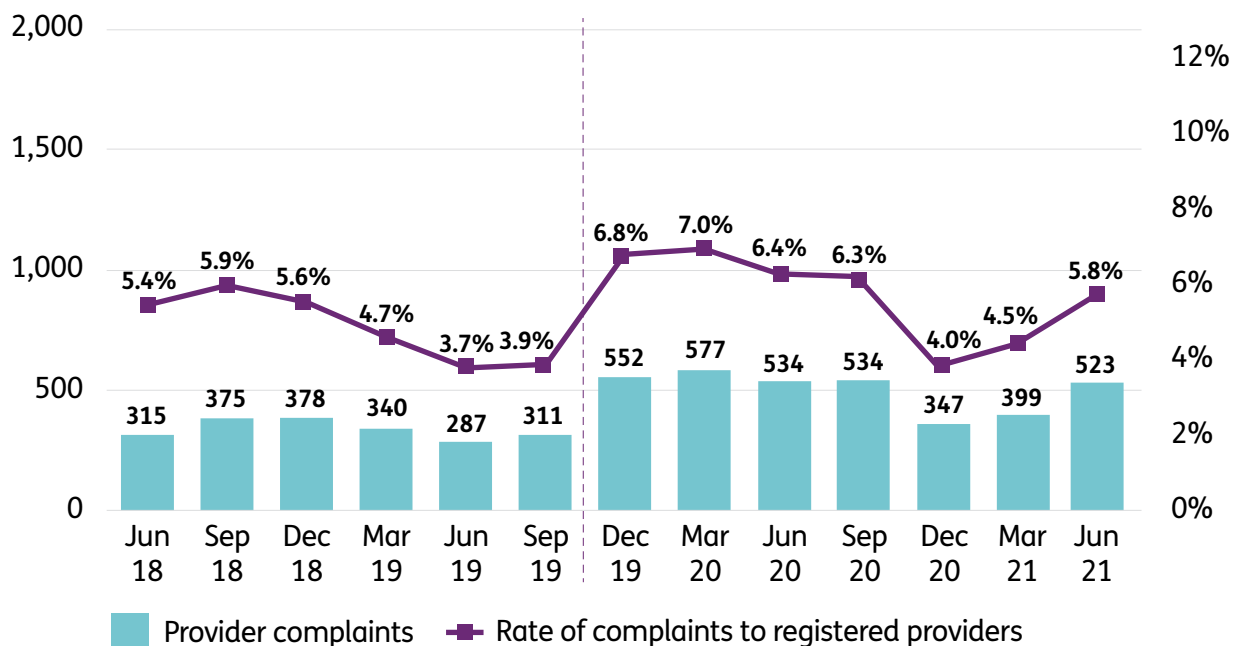


Figure 45: Number and proportion of provider complaints over time incrementally (top) and cumulatively (bottom) – National³¹



³¹ In the 'My Customer Requests' tile launched in October 2019, it is possible to record multiple related parties as the source of a complaint and in some cases both participants and providers or other parties are linked to a single case. Previously, the single source was often recorded as a participant regardless of whether a provider was associated with the complaint. As a result of using the 'My Customer Requests' tile, the number and rate of provider complaints increased in 2019-20 Q2.



Emma achieves record-breaking milestones and life goals

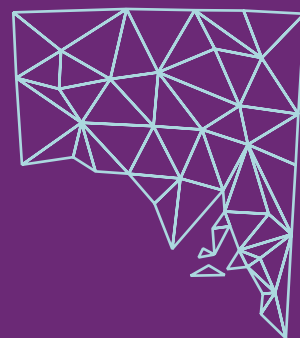
After five determined years, Adelaide runner and NDIS participant **Emma** is about to clock up her 100th parkrun. It's a huge milestone for any amateur athlete, but for Emma, it's also hot on the heels of achieving one of her most significant life goals – completing a gruelling, full-length marathon (42.195km), while also managing debilitating symptoms of multiple sclerosis (MS).

“For me, running a marathon is about saying to myself I’m actually bigger than this disease, that it’s not going to stop me, that this is something I always wanted to do, and I can still do this,” said Emma, 41, of Woodville, South Australia.

“When I was diagnosed with MS in 2017, it felt like it was the death of many parts of my life, and who I was as a person. In the short term, I lost my career as a midwife, and my independence. It was hard to get around or look after my kids properly. It was devastating and confronting, and very challenging for the whole family.”

But Emma doesn't give up easily. With support from NDIS providers, her loving family and friends, and medication, she has built a new life, which allows her to manage her MS symptoms, while continuing to do the things she values, including having a career, enjoying her family, and running.

“The NDIS allows me to live my best life,” she said. “It means I have the energy to do things that are important to me, and it means my life is not just about my disease.”



Part Four:

Providers and the growing market



Providers and the growing market

The provider market continues to grow with a focus on therapeutic supports and daily activities.

4.1 Support categories

The largest support categories are core support for daily activities, followed by core support for social and community participation, followed by capacity building for daily activities.

\$23.3bn in support was provided in 2020-21. The largest support categories are core daily activities (56 per cent of total payments), social and community participation (17 per cent of total payments), and capacity-building daily activities (therapy services) (12 per cent of total payments).

Figure 46: Total payments from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021

Support Category	Total payments (in \$m) Jul-20 to Jun-21	% total payments
Core - Daily Activities	13,083	56.1%
Core - Community	3,970	17.0%
Core - Consumables & Transport	1,119	4.8%
Capacity Building - Daily Activities ³²	2,844	12.2%
Capacity Building - Other	1,495	6.4%
Capital	807	3.5%
Total	23,319	100.0%

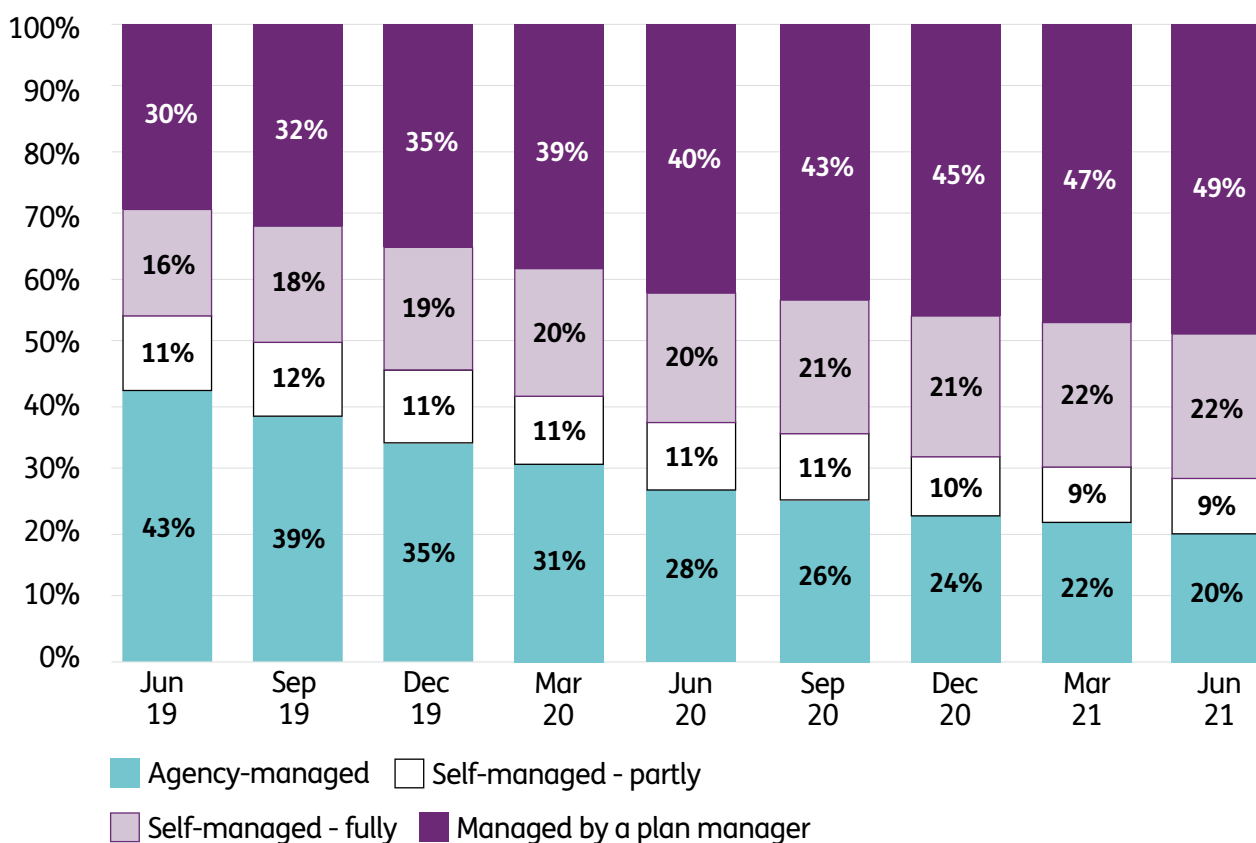
³² Includes therapy services.

4.2 Plan management types

Over the past two years, the proportion of participants who:

- **self-manage** their plan has increased from 27% to 31%
- use a **plan manager** has increased from 30% to 49%
- have an **agency-managed** plan has decreased from 43% to 20%.

Figure 47: Distribution of active participants by method of financial plan management over time cumulatively – National

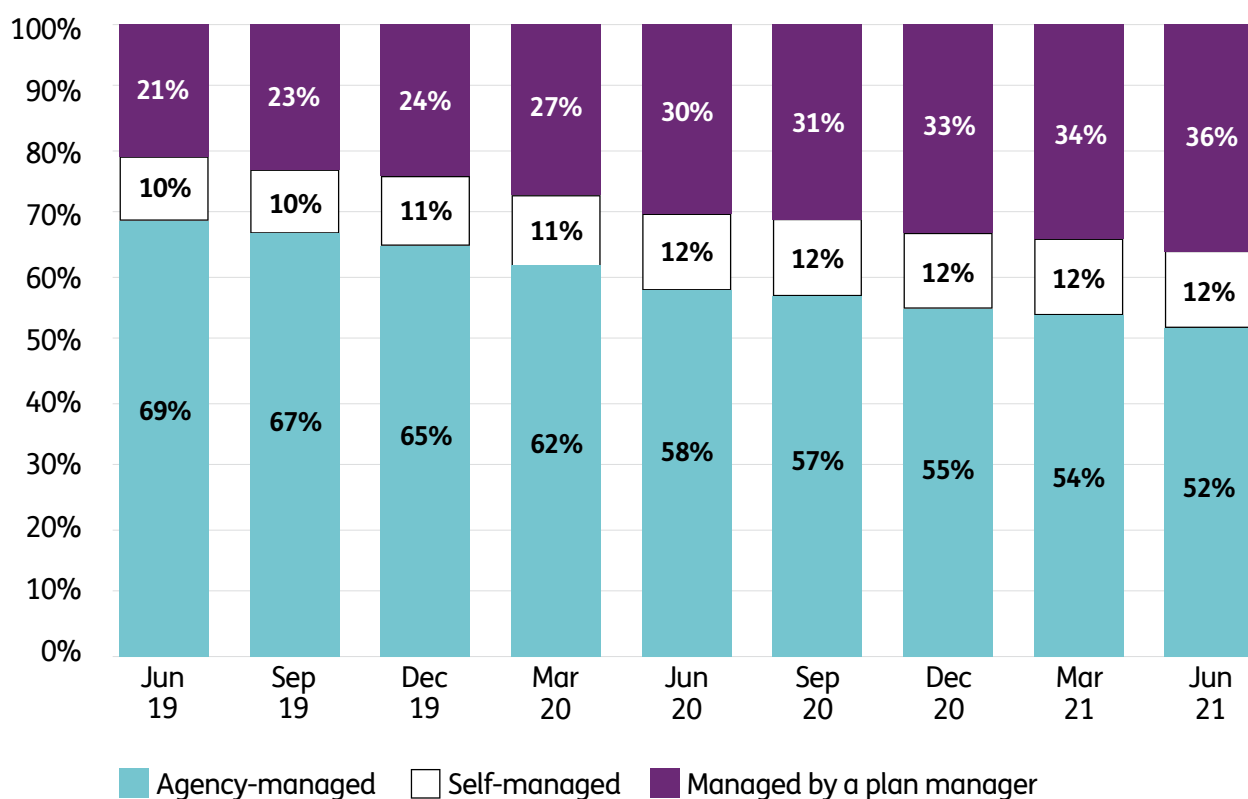


Part Four: Providers and the growing market

There have also been changes in plan budgets across these three plan management types:

- **self-management** has increased from 10% to 12%
- payments managed by a **plan manager** has increased from 21% to 36%
- **agency-managed** payments decreased from 69% to 52%.

Figure 48: Distribution of plan budgets by method of financial plan management over time cumulatively – National



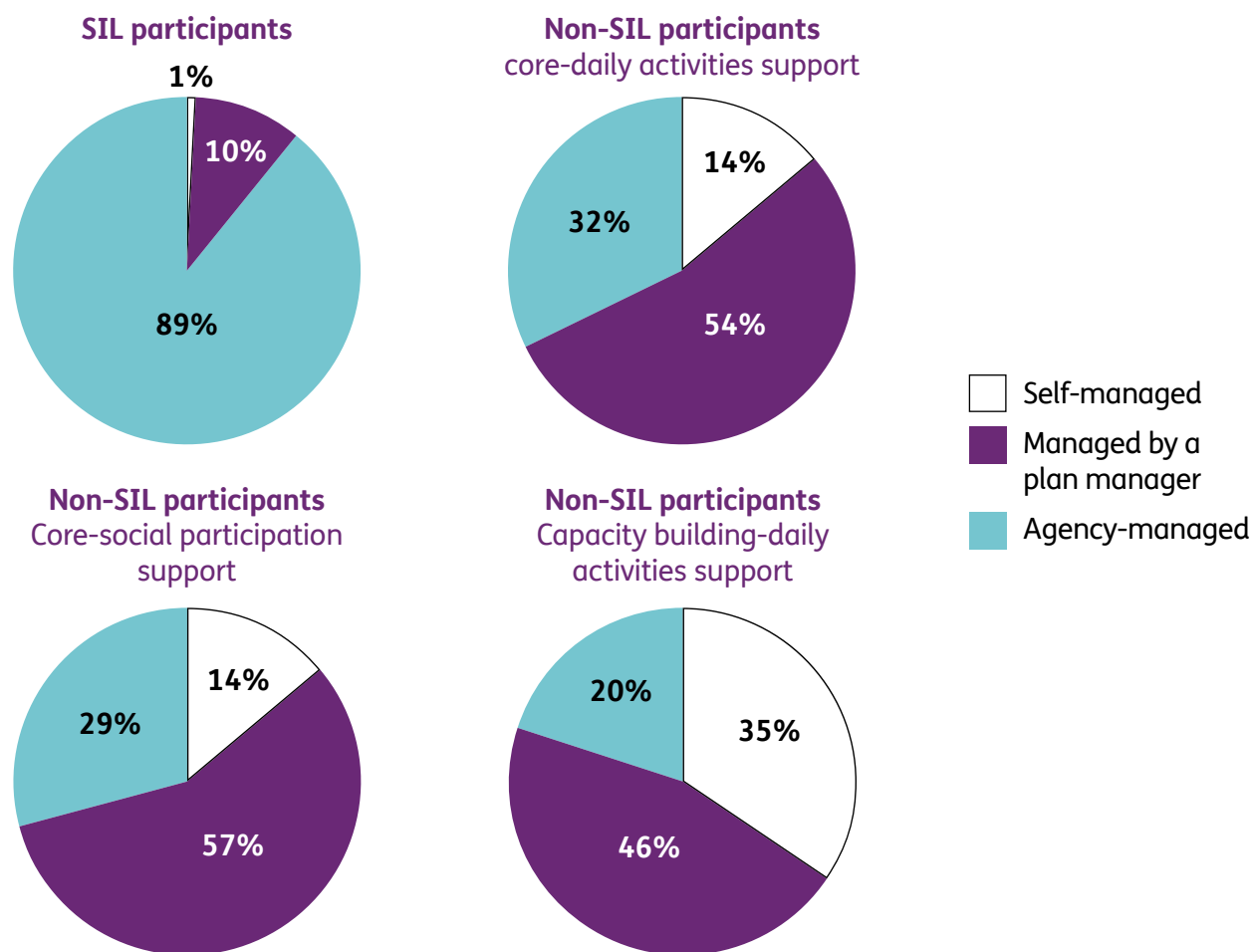
Part Four: Providers and the growing market

In 2020-21, of the \$23.3bn, \$3.0bn was self-managed (13%), \$8.3bn was managed by a plan manager (36%), and \$12.0bn was agency-managed (51%).³³

The proportion of payments self-managed, managed by a plan manager, and agency-managed differs by support category. In 2020-21:

- payments for **SIL participants** was \$7.8bn. Of this, \$84m was self-managed (1%), \$774m was managed by a plan manager (10%), and \$7.0bn was agency-managed (89%).
- payments for **non-SIL participants receiving core-daily activities support** was \$6.8bn. Of this, \$936m was self-managed (14%), \$3.7bn was managed by a plan manager (54%), and \$2.2bn was agency-managed (32%).
- payments for **non-SIL participants receiving core-social participation support** was \$3.1bn. Of this, \$432m was self-managed (14%), \$1.8bn was managed by a plan manager (57%), and \$876m was agency-managed (29%).
- payments for **non-SIL participants receiving capacity building-daily activities support (therapy supports)** was \$2.7bn. Of this, \$928 was self-managed (35%), \$1.2bn was managed by a plan manager (46%), and \$530m was agency-managed (20%).

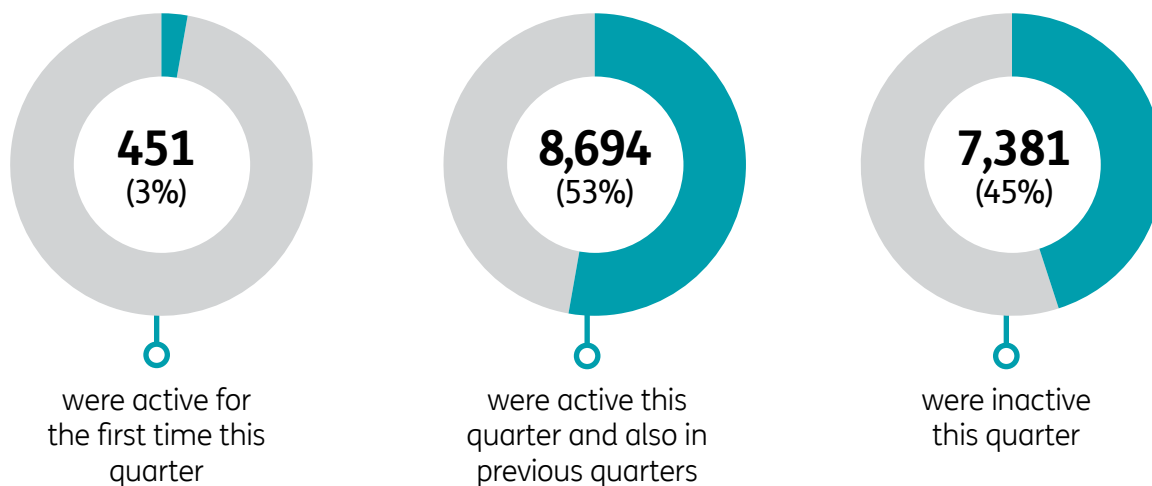
Figure 49: Plan management types by largest support categories



³³ Includes in-kind services.

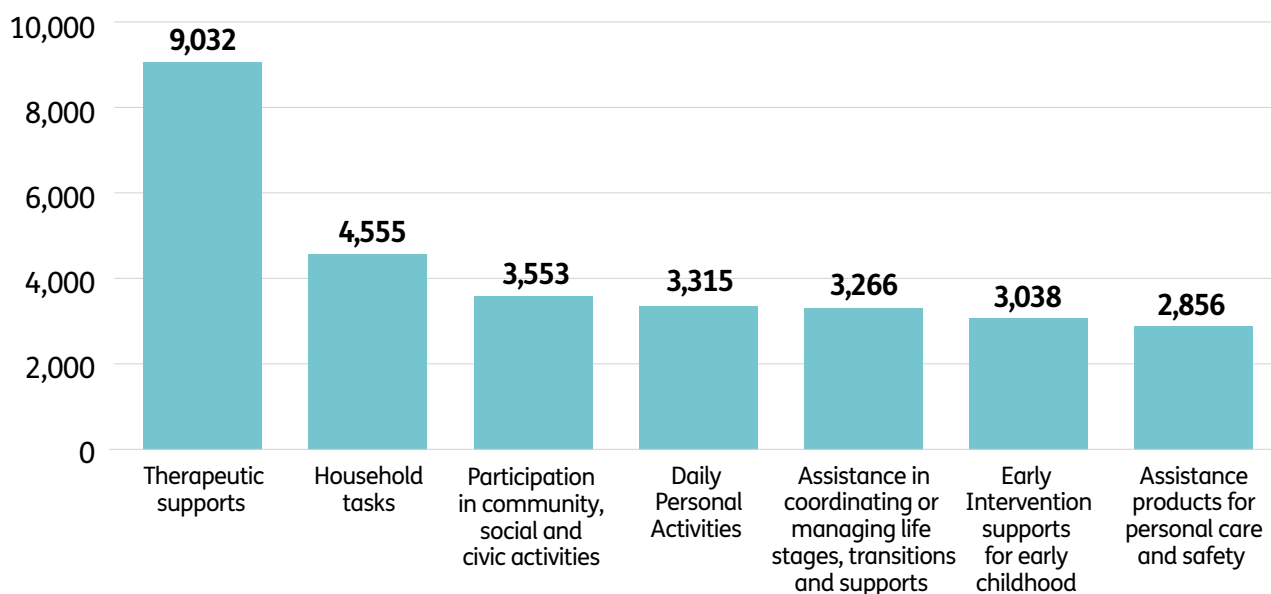
4.3 Agency-managed providers

Since the start of the Scheme, 16,526 providers have supported agency-managed participants³⁴
Of these:



The registration groups with the largest number of active registered providers are therapeutic supports and household tasks.

Figure 50: The largest registration groups for active providers



³⁴ Self-managed participants and participants with a plan manager can use unregistered providers, and hence the total number of providers supporting participants will be higher than 16,526. Further, some of the 7,381 inactive providers in the quarter will be supporting participants with a plan manager or who self-manage.

Part Four: Providers and the growing market

The largest ten providers by payments in 2020-21 were:

Figure 51: Largest ten providers by payments in 2020-21 (Agency-managed)

ABN	Provider name	Total payment amount
15101252171	Life Without Barriers	\$291m
15101252171	Aruma Services	\$226m
87302064152	The Northcott Society	\$141m
45000062288	Cerebral Palsy Alliance	\$140m
80009670704	Endeavour Foundation	\$132m
85097999347	Lifestyle Solutions Australia	\$95m
27009942269	CPL – Choice, Passion, Life	\$93m
29001260153	The Disability Trust	\$88m
37020000711	Minda Incorporated	\$86m
99000112729	Australian Foundation for Disability	\$86m

4.4 Plan managers

Payments to plan managers was \$8.3bn, noting that plan managers use the money to pay service providers to provide supports on behalf of their participants. The largest 10 plan managers by payments in 2020-21 were:

Figure 52: Largest ten plan managers by payments in 2020-21

ABN	Provider name	Total payment amount
52617963676	My Plan Manager.Com.Au Pty Ltd	\$907m
54609868993	Plan Management Partners Pty Ltd	\$593m
24619787692	National Disability Support Partners Pty	\$344m
22729829472	Moirs Ltd	\$231m
92622499898	Leap In! Australia Ltd	\$230m
62149233634	Integrated Care Pty Ltd	\$227m
69624874219	Maple Plan Pty Ltd	\$209m
16621969337	Peak Plan Management Pty Ltd	\$182m
18620281209	Instacare Pty Ltd	\$175m
73624994565	Connect Plan Management Pty Ltd	\$128m

4.5 Choice and control, utilisation and market concentration

Comprehensive data on market effectiveness is being used to improve participant outcomes across all regions through identifying thin markets.

Three key indicators outlined in the NDIA Corporate Plan aspiration of a “Competitive market with innovative supports” are:

– **choice and control**

– **utilisation**

– **market concentration**

Understanding the extent of variation in performance in these indicators across geographical regions assists with identifying “hot spots”.

Choice and control

The NDIS outcomes framework questionnaires ask participants “Do you choose who supports you?”. The percentage who indicated that they choose who supports them was compared across geographical regions to identify the regions comparatively better and worse than others.

The ‘benchmark’ in this analysis is the national average after adjusting for the proportion of participants in SIL in each service district and the length of time participants have been in the Scheme.

Overall, 52 of the 80 service districts (65 per cent) in the analysis were within five percentage points of the national average, one service district (1 per cent) was more than 10 percentage points above the national average, and three service districts (4 per cent) were more than 10 percentage points below the national average.

The one service district more than 10 percentage points above the national average was Barkly in the Northern Territory. The three service districts more than 10 percentage points below the national average were Darwin Remote, Katherine and East Arnhem in the Northern Territory.

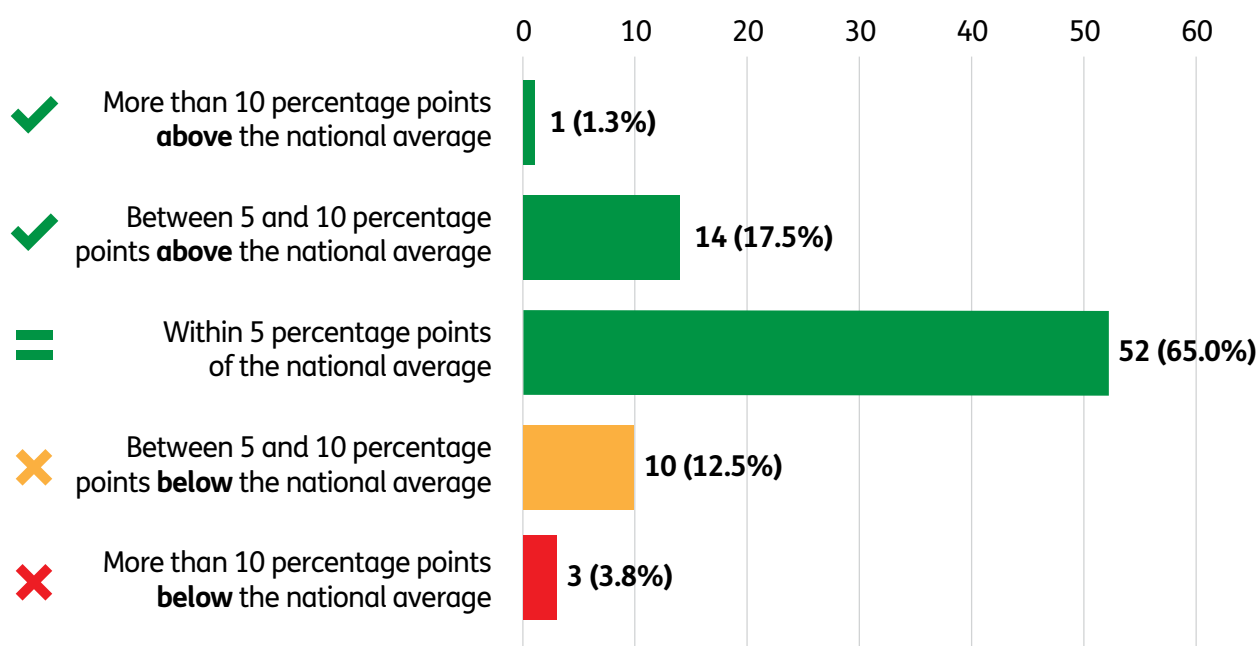
At 30 June 2021:

– Darwin Remote has 390 active participants and plan budgets totalling \$33 million

– Katherine has 195 active participants and plan budgets totalling \$33 million

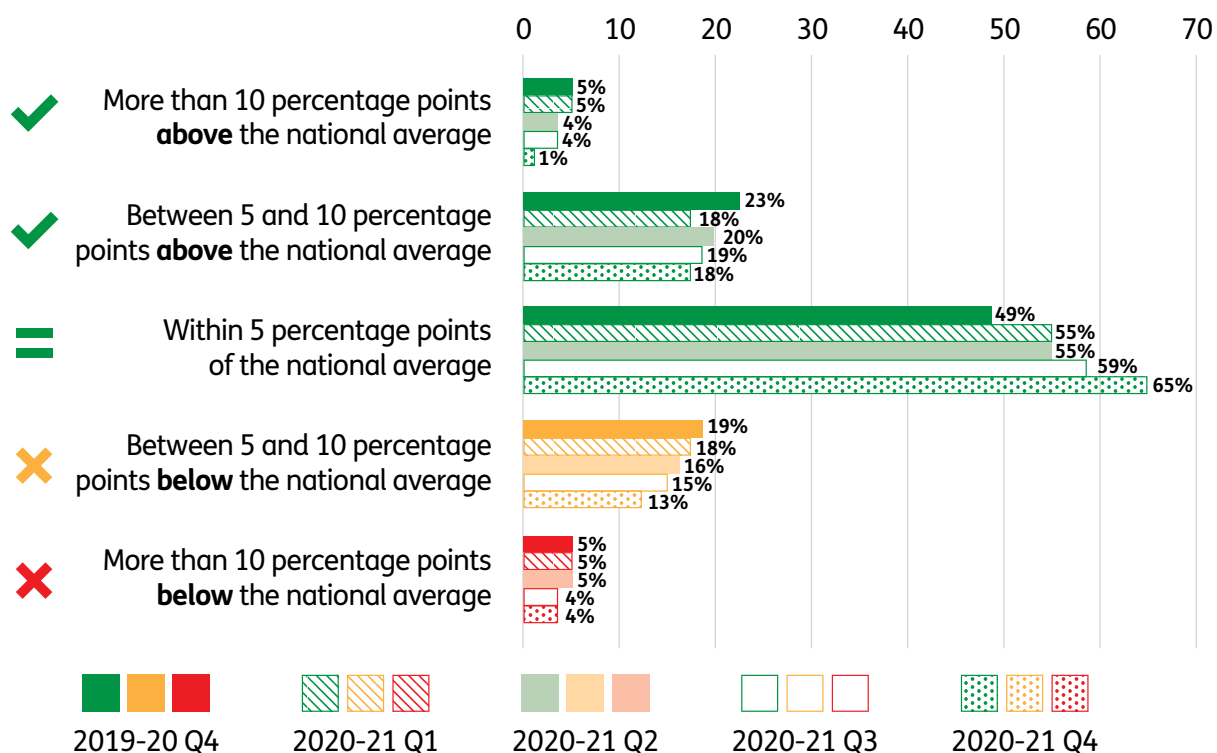
– East Arnhem has 194 active participants and plan budgets totalling \$22 million

Figure 53: Choice and control – number of service districts – gap to benchmark



Over the last year there has been an improvement in the percentage of service districts more than 10 percentage points below the national average and an increase in the percentage of service districts more than 10 percentage points above the national average. Significantly, the number of regions within 5 per cent of the national average has improved from 44 (55 per cent) to 52 (65 per cent).

Figure 54: Choice and control – number of service districts – gap to benchmark – trend



The tables on the next page list, by service district, the results for the most recent quarter.

Figure 55: Choice and control service districts breakdown – 30 June 2021

Region	State/Territory	Active participants	Annualised plan budget (\$m)
More than 10 percentage points above the national average			
Barkly	Northern Territory	157	\$14
Between 5 and 10 percentage points above the national average			
ACT	Australian Capital Territory	8,584	\$536
Hunter New England	New South Wales	24,849	\$1,759
Barwon	Victoria	9,122	\$590
Inner Gippsland	Victoria	4,782	\$282
Outer Gippsland	Victoria	2,171	\$136
Toowoomba	Queensland	6,071	\$463
Eastern Adelaide	South Australia	3,522	\$271
Eyre and Western	South Australia	1,276	\$90
Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island	South Australia	1,119	\$82
Limestone Coast	South Australia	1,356	\$85
Murray and Mallee	South Australia	1,726	\$110
Yorke and Mid North	South Australia	1,645	\$93
TAS North West	Tasmania	2,504	\$198
TAS South West	Tasmania	2,782	\$250
Within 5 percentage points of the national average			
Central Coast	New South Wales	8,307	\$529
Far West	New South Wales	637	\$48
Illawarra Shoalhaven	New South Wales	8,558	\$612
Mid North Coast	New South Wales	5,949	\$408
Murrumbidgee	New South Wales	6,421	\$422
Nepean Blue Mountains	New South Wales	8,566	\$582
North Sydney	New South Wales	10,132	\$834
Northern NSW	New South Wales	6,903	\$492
Southern NSW	New South Wales	4,144	\$254
Western NSW	New South Wales	6,066	\$457
Western Sydney	New South Wales	16,774	\$1,162
Bayside Peninsula	Victoria	14,972	\$1,107
Central Highlands	Victoria	5,017	\$301
Goulburn	Victoria	3,727	\$200
Hume Moreland	Victoria	8,449	\$483
Inner East Melbourne	Victoria	9,193	\$729
Loddon	Victoria	6,663	\$373
Mallee	Victoria	2,064	\$135
North East Melbourne	Victoria	12,061	\$817
Outer East Melbourne	Victoria	9,108	\$616
Ovens Murray	Victoria	3,232	\$186
Western District	Victoria	3,693	\$237
Western Melbourne	Victoria	11,115	\$658
Beenleigh	Queensland	9,390	\$675
Brisbane	Queensland	17,266	\$1,345

Figure 55: Choice and control service districts breakdown – 30 June 2021 cont.

Region	State/Territory	Active participants	Annualised plan budget (\$m)
Within 5 percentage points of the national average cont.			
Bundaberg	Queensland	2,762	\$187
Caboolture/Strathpine	Queensland	9,697	\$710
Cairns	Queensland	4,517	\$383
Ipswich	Queensland	7,589	\$504
Mackay	Queensland	3,108	\$200
Maroochydore	Queensland	8,071	\$618
Maryborough	Queensland	3,834	\$290
Robina	Queensland	9,480	\$654
Rockhampton	Queensland	5,168	\$333
Townsville	Queensland	5,761	\$417
Adelaide Hills	South Australia	1,548	\$94
Barossa, Light and Lower North	South Australia	1,952	\$99
Northern Adelaide	South Australia	13,749	\$850
Southern Adelaide	South Australia	8,996	\$654
Western Adelaide	South Australia	3,643	\$256
TAS North	Tasmania	3,049	\$238
TAS South East	Tasmania	2,322	\$159
Darwin Urban	Northern Territory	2,458	\$258
Great Southern	Western Australia	974	\$66
South Metro	Western Australia	6,232	\$384
Kimberley-Pilbara	Western Australia	1,253	\$97
South West	Western Australia	3,382	\$206
North East Metro	Western Australia	6,403	\$481
South East Metro	Western Australia	4,457	\$354
Midwest-Gascoyne	Western Australia	879	\$48
Central South Metro	Western Australia	5,034	\$347
North Metro	Western Australia	5,200	\$340
Between 5 and 10 percentage points below the national average			
South Eastern Sydney	New South Wales	9,712	\$708
South Western Sydney	New South Wales	19,823	\$1,271
Sydney	New South Wales	8,028	\$568
Brimbank Melton	Victoria	7,716	\$446
Southern Melbourne	Victoria	11,404	\$684
Far North (SA)	South Australia	502	\$42
Central Australia	Northern Territory	672	\$131
Wheat Belt	Western Australia	966	\$54
Central North Metro	Western Australia	4,526	\$397
Goldfields-Esperance	Western Australia	642	\$48
More than 10 percentage points below the national average			
Darwin Remote	Northern Territory	390	\$33
East Arnhem	Northern Territory	194	\$22
Katherine	Northern Territory	195	\$33

Utilisation

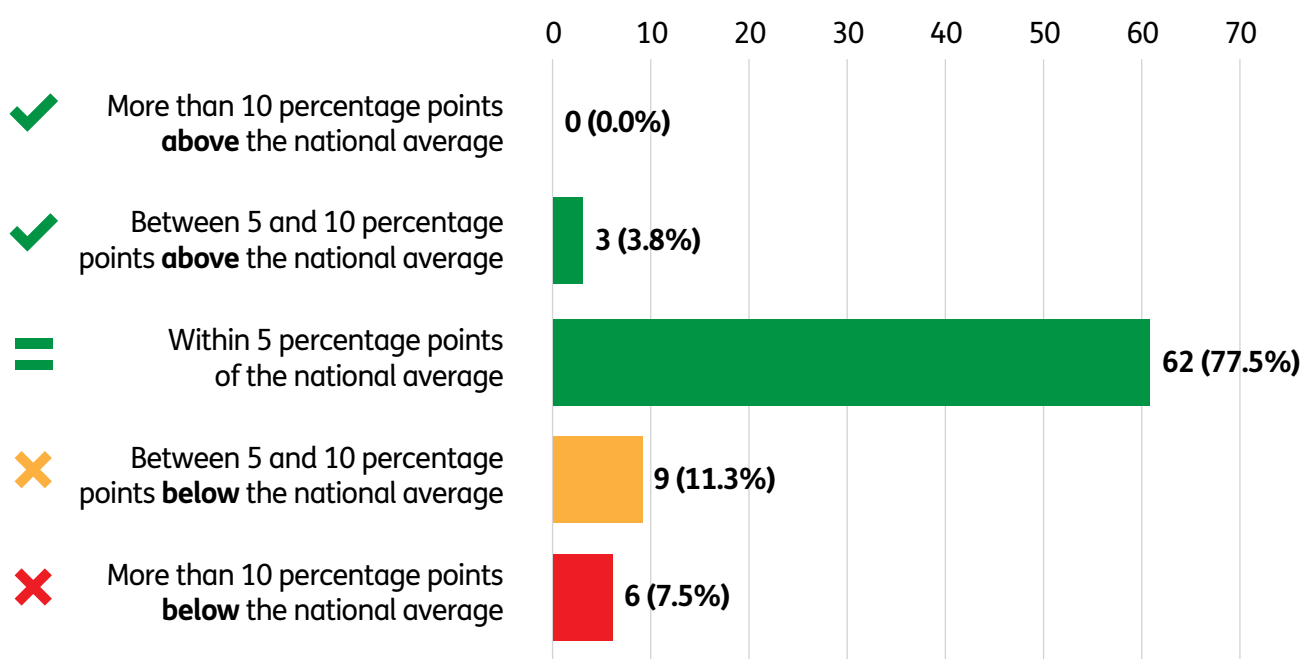
As seen in Figure 14, the average payment per participant has increased by 12 per cent over the three years from 30 June 2018 to 30 June 2021, and the average plan budget has increased by almost 21 per cent over the same three years. Participants are getting more support over time so understanding differences between plan budgets and payments (utilisation) across geographical regions is important in identifying “hot spots” where participants are getting relatively less support compared with other geographical regions.

Overall, 62 of the 80 service districts (78 per cent) in the analysis are within five percentage points of the national average³⁵, no service districts were more than 10 percentage points above the national average, and six service districts (8 per cent) were more than 10 percentage points below the national average.

The six service districts more than 10 percentage points below the national average were smaller regional and remote service districts in South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. These six service districts have remained consistent over recent quarters. The Thin Market trials underway, as detailed in section 4.6 of this report, are targeting some of these service districts.

There are nine service districts between five and 10 percentage points below the national average – these are also mainly in regional and remote areas.

Figure 56: Utilisation – number of service districts – gap to benchmark

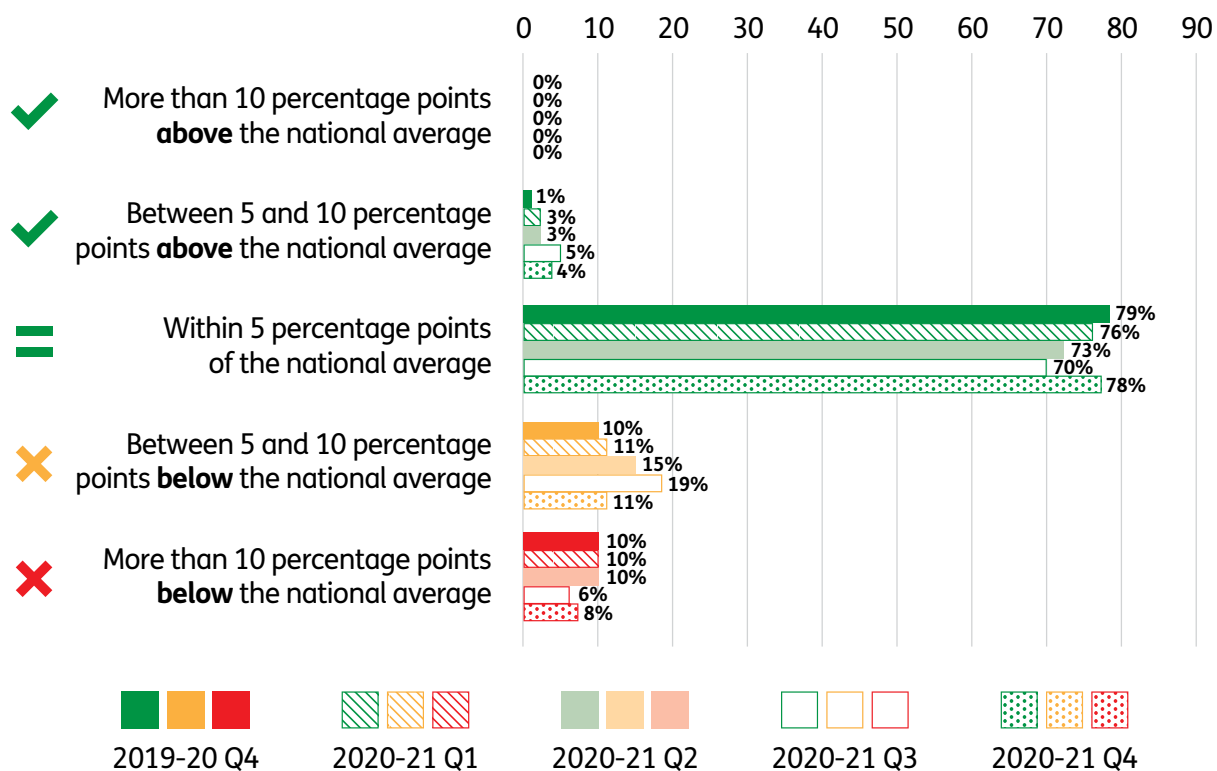


³⁵ Utilisation has been adjusted to account for the differences in the proportion of participants in each service district receiving SIL, along with the time participants have been in the Scheme.

Part Four: Providers and the growing market

Over the last year there has been a slight improvement in the number of service districts more than 10 percentage points below the national average, from 8 to 6 regions. The number of service districts within 5 percentage points of the national average has remained consistent.

Figure 57: Utilisation – number of service districts – gap to benchmark – trend



The tables on the next page list, by service district, the results for the most recent quarter.

Figure 58: Utilisation service districts breakdown – 30 June 2021

Region	State/Territory	Active participants	Annualised plan budget (\$m)
Between 5 and 10 percentage points above the national average			
South Western Sydney	New South Wales	19,823	\$1,271
Brisbane	Queensland	17,266	\$1,345
Robina	Queensland	9,480	\$654
Within 5 percentage points of the national average			
ACT	Australian Capital Territory	8,584	\$536
Central Coast	New South Wales	8,307	\$529
Hunter New England	New South Wales	24,849	\$1,759
Illawarra Shoalhaven	New South Wales	8,558	\$612
Mid North Coast	New South Wales	5,949	\$408
Murrumbidgee	New South Wales	6,421	\$422
Nepean Blue Mountains	New South Wales	8,566	\$582
North Sydney	New South Wales	10,132	\$834
Northern NSW	New South Wales	6,903	\$492
South Eastern Sydney	New South Wales	9,712	\$708
Southern NSW	New South Wales	4,144	\$254
Sydney	New South Wales	8,028	\$568
Western Sydney	New South Wales	16,774	\$1,162
Bayside Peninsula	Victoria	14,972	\$1,107
Brimbank Melton	Victoria	7,716	\$446
Goulburn	Victoria	3,727	\$200
Hume Moreland	Victoria	8,449	\$483
Inner East Melbourne	Victoria	9,193	\$729
Inner Gippsland	Victoria	4,782	\$282
Loddon	Victoria	6,663	\$373
Mallee	Victoria	2,064	\$135
North East Melbourne	Victoria	12,061	\$817
Outer East Melbourne	Victoria	9,108	\$616
Outer Gippsland	Victoria	2,171	\$136
Ovens Murray	Victoria	3,232	\$186
Southern Melbourne	Victoria	11,404	\$684
Western Melbourne	Victoria	11,115	\$658
Beenleigh	Queensland	9,390	\$675
Bundaberg	Queensland	2,762	\$187
Caboolture/Strathpine	Queensland	9,697	\$710
Cairns	Queensland	4,517	\$383
Ipswich	Queensland	7,589	\$504
Mackay	Queensland	3,108	\$200
Maroochydore	Queensland	8,071	\$618
Maryborough	Queensland	3,834	\$290
Rockhampton	Queensland	5,168	\$333
Toowoomba	Queensland	6,071	\$463
Townsville	Queensland	5,761	\$417
Adelaide Hills	South Australia	1,548	\$94

Figure 58: Utilisation service districts breakdown – 30 June 2021 cont.

Region	State/Territory	Active participants	Annualised plan budget (\$m)
Within 5 percentage points of the national average cont.			
Barossa, Light and Lower North	South Australia	1,952	\$99
Eastern Adelaide	South Australia	3,522	\$271
Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island	South Australia	1,119	\$82
Northern Adelaide	South Australia	13,749	\$850
Southern Adelaide	South Australia	8,996	\$654
Western Adelaide	South Australia	3,643	\$256
TAS North	Tasmania	3,049	\$238
TAS North West	Tasmania	2,504	\$198
TAS South East	Tasmania	2,322	\$159
TAS South West	Tasmania	2,782	\$250
Central Australia	Northern Territory	672	\$131
Darwin Urban	Northern Territory	2,458	\$258
Katherine	Northern Territory	195	\$33
Great Southern	Western Australia	974	\$66
South Metro	Western Australia	6,232	\$384
South West	Western Australia	3,382	\$206
North East Metro	Western Australia	6,403	\$481
South East Metro	Western Australia	4,457	\$354
Central North Metro	Western Australia	4,526	\$397
Midwest-Gascoyne	Western Australia	879	\$48
Central South Metro	Western Australia	5,034	\$347
Goldfields-Esperance	Western Australia	642	\$48
North Metro	Western Australia	5,200	\$340
Between 5 and 10 percentage points below the national average			
Far West	New South Wales	637	\$48
Western NSW	New South Wales	6,066	\$457
Barwon	Victoria	9,122	\$590
Central Highlands	Victoria	5,017	\$301
Western District	Victoria	3,693	\$237
Limestone Coast	South Australia	1,356	\$85
Murray and Mallee	South Australia	1,726	\$110
Yorke and Mid North	South Australia	1,645	\$93
Wheat Belt	Western Australia	966	\$54
More than 10 percentage points below the national average			
Eyre and Western	South Australia	1,276	\$90
Far North (SA)	South Australia	502	\$42
Barkly	Northern Territory	157	\$14
Darwin Remote	Northern Territory	390	\$33
East Arnhem	Northern Territory	194	\$22
Kimberley-Pilbara	Western Australia	1,253	\$97

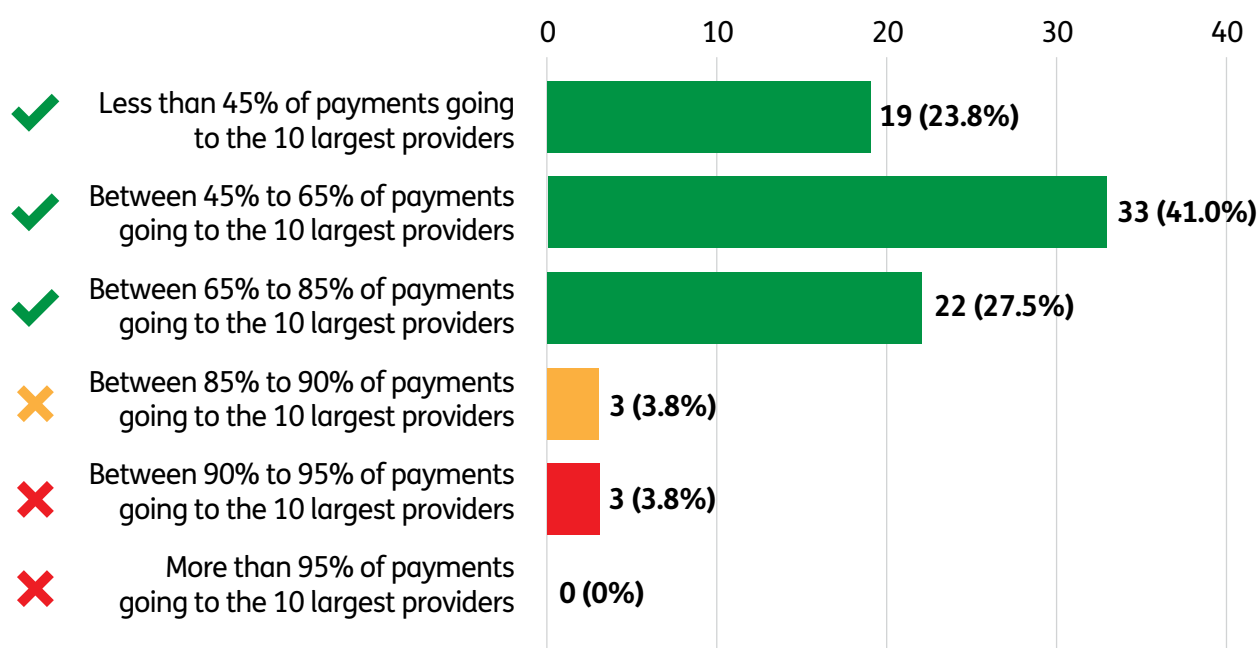
Market concentration

Understanding the distribution of payments to service providers in a service district can indicate whether a small number of providers receive most of the payments from the NDIA, or whether a large number of providers are receiving the payments. Where only a small number of providers are receiving a large amount of the payments, the market is considered to be more concentrated and could mean that there is less competition in the area. On average across service districts, 59 per cent of payments go to the largest 10 providers.

There are six service districts where 85 per cent or more of payments go to the largest 10 providers (8 per cent) and 19 service districts where less than 45 per cent of payments went to the 10 largest providers (24 per cent).

All of the six service districts where more than 85 per cent of payments go to the 10 largest providers, are regional and remote areas in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia.

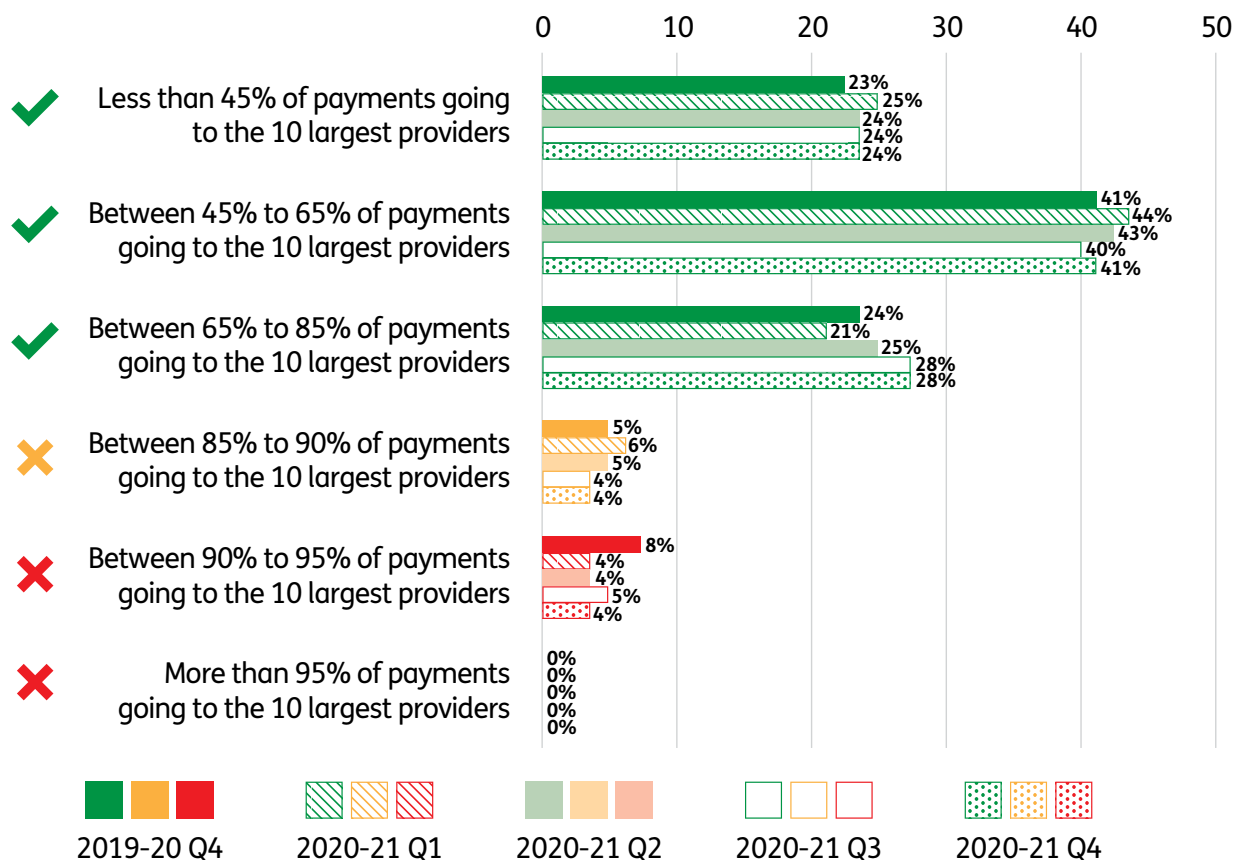
Figure 59: Market concentration – number of service districts – gap to benchmark



Part Four: Providers and the growing market

The number of service districts where 85 per cent or more of payments go to the largest 10 providers has fallen from 5 (6 per cent) to 3 (4 per cent). The number of service districts where less than 45 per cent of payments went to the 10 largest providers has remained consistent. The number of service districts where between 65 per cent to 85 per cent of payments go to the 10 largest providers has increased from 17 (21 per cent) to 22 (28 per cent).

Figure 60: Market concentration – number of service districts – gap to benchmark – trend



The tables on the next page list, by service district, the results for the most recent quarter.

Figure 61: Market concentration service districts breakdown – 30 June 2021

Region	State/Territory	Active participants	Annualised plan budget (\$m)
Less than 45% of payments going to the 10 largest providers			
Central Coast	New South Wales	8,307	\$529
Hunter New England	New South Wales	24,849	\$1,759
Nepean Blue Mountains	New South Wales	8,566	\$582
South Western Sydney	New South Wales	19,823	\$1,271
Sydney	New South Wales	8,028	\$568
Western Sydney	New South Wales	16,774	\$1,162
Hume Moreland	Victoria	8,449	\$483
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South East Metro	Western Australia	4,457	\$354
Central South Metro	Western Australia	5,034	\$347
North Metro	Western Australia	5,200	\$340
Between 45% to 65% of payments going to the 10 largest providers			
ACT	Australian Capital Territory	8,584	\$536
Illawarra Shoalhaven	New South Wales	8,558	\$612
Mid North Coast	New South Wales	5,949	\$408
Murrumbidgee	New South Wales	6,421	\$422
North Sydney	New South Wales	10,132	\$834
Northern NSW	New South Wales	6,903	\$492
South Eastern Sydney	New South Wales	9,712	\$708
Southern NSW	New South Wales	4,144	\$254
Western NSW	New South Wales	6,066	\$457
Bayside Peninsula	Victoria	14,972	\$1,107
Brimbank Melton	Victoria	7,716	\$446
Central Highlands	Victoria	5,017	\$301
Goulburn	Victoria	3,727	\$200
Inner East Melbourne	Victoria	9,193	\$729
Loddon	Victoria	6,663	\$373
Outer East Melbourne	Victoria	9,108	\$616
Ovens Murray	Victoria	3,232	\$186
Southern Melbourne	Victoria	11,404	\$684
Western Melbourne	Victoria	11,115	\$658
Cairns	Queensland	4,517	\$383
Mackay	Queensland	3,108	\$200
Maroochydore	Queensland	8,071	\$618
Rockhampton	Queensland	5,168	\$333

Figure 61: Market concentration service districts breakdown – 30 June 2021 cont.

Region	State/Territory	Active participants	Annualised plan budget (\$m)
Between 45% to 65% of payments going to the 10 largest providers cont.			
Townsville	Queensland	5,761	\$417
Barossa, Light and Lower North	South Australia	1,952	\$99
Eastern Adelaide	South Australia	3,522	\$271
Northern Adelaide	South Australia	13,749	\$850
Southern Adelaide	South Australia	8,996	\$654
Western Adelaide	South Australia	3,643	\$256
TAS South East	Tasmania	2,322	\$159
TAS South West	Tasmania	2,782	\$250
Darwin Urban	Northern Territory	2,458	\$258
Central North Metro	Western Australia	4,526	\$397
Between 65% to 85% of payments going to the 10 largest providers			
Far West	New South Wales	637	\$48
Barwon	Victoria	9,122	\$590
Inner Gippsland	Victoria	4,782	\$282
Mallee	Victoria	2,064	\$135
Outer Gippsland	Victoria	2,171	\$136
Western District	Victoria	3,693	\$237
Bundaberg	Queensland	2,762	\$187
Maryborough	Queensland	3,834	\$290
Adelaide Hills	South Australia	1,548	\$94
Eyre and Western	South Australia	1,276	\$90
Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island	South Australia	1,119	\$82
Limestone Coast	South Australia	1,356	\$85
Murray and Mallee	South Australia	1,726	\$110
Yorke and Mid North	South Australia	1,645	\$93
TAS North	Tasmania	3,049	\$238
TAS North West	Tasmania	2,504	\$198
Barkly	Northern Territory	157	\$14
Central Australia	Northern Territory	672	\$131
Darwin Remote	Northern Territory	390	\$33
Kimberley-Pilbara	Western Australia	1,253	\$97
South West	Western Australia	3,382	\$206
Wheat Belt	Western Australia	966	\$54
Between 85% to 90% of payments going to the 10 largest providers			
East Arnhem	Northern Territory	194	\$22
Katherine	Northern Territory	195	\$33
Great Southern	Western Australia	974	\$66
Between 90% to 95% of payments going to the 10 largest providers			
Far North (SA)	South Australia	502	\$42
Midwest-Gascoyne	Western Australia	879	\$48
Goldfields-Esperance	Western Australia	642	\$48

4.6 Thin markets

Thin market intervention projects are underway in all States and Territories.

The NDIA has reviewed the temporary measures in place for COVID-19 to ensure that participants continue to have access to supports. This market intervention is happening in markets all over Australia.

There are currently 24 market intervention projects underway. Five have recently been completed:

- In LaTrobe and Ararat in Victoria, the NDIA undertook a market intervention over 12 months to address unmet need for specialist behaviour support services. The intervention resulted in five new registered specialist behaviour support providers entering the market in Latrobe, and four in Ararat, and a further five providers applying for registration to commence delivering specialist behaviour support services in these areas.
- In Walgett, NSW, the market intervention over 12 months focused on improving the market across all supports for a target cohort of NDIS participants with low plan utilisation, half of whom are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. The intervention resulted in 13 new providers entering the Walgett market. Ongoing activities are underway to improve community awareness and understanding of the Scheme and to continue to support the local provider market, including through workforce initiatives.
- In Cloncurry, Queensland, the market intervention over 12 months focused on improving the market across all supports for all NDIS participants in this LGA, close to half of whom are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. The intervention resulted in three new registered providers entering the Cloncurry market, including a locally based core supports provider, two occupational therapists and a mental health social worker. In addition, three new unregistered NDIS providers commenced service in this market over the period of the intervention.
- In Katherine, Northern Territory, a market intervention over 12 months tested a collaborative purchasing model (a ‘coordinated funding proposal’). Through this approach, a provider has now delivered assistive technology assessments to a group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally and linguistically diverse participants. Support coordinators are now working with assistive technology distributors and home modification providers to complete the delivery of the supports identified in the participants’ assessments.
- In Wakefield, South Australia, a short plan deep dive identified a number of plan implementation issues which are now being resolved and will help remove barriers to participants using their NDIS plans.

4.7 NDIS Pricing

The NDIA has reviewed the temporary measures in place for COVID-19 to ensure that participants continue to have access to supports.

COVID-19 response

In February 2021 the NDIA reviewed the temporary measures put in place during COVID-19 to ensure participants continued to have access to supports. The focus of the review was on determining what was needed to safely deliver supports and services in a COVID normal situation. This means adjusting to our current circumstances, where few restrictions are in place but there is an ongoing focus on safety.

A number of temporary measures remain in place to support participants, providers, staff and partners:

PPE (Workers)

Providers operating in an area subject to public health orders during extended 'lockdown' periods can claim for the cost of PPE for their workers against a participant's plan for up to \$27 per worker per participant per day.

National COVID supports

Providers of services to participants who are COVID positive or who are required to self-isolate can continue to claim for Cleaning services and Additional Supports.

Low cost Assistive Technology (AT)

All participants can spend up to \$1,500 on low cost AT items from their existing capacity building budgets to facilitate the delivery of supports through telehealth. Expenditure on these items will be closely monitored on an ongoing basis.

PPE (Participants)

All participants in restricted areas with a reasonable and necessary need for PPE when receiving disability supports can continue to claim up to \$50 per week from their low cost disability-related health consumables budget. Participants may not claim for the cost of PPE used for ordinary daily living. Expenditure on these items will be closely monitored on an ongoing basis.

SIL pricing and policy reform

In order to address administrative delays, lack of transparency and Scheme sustainability, the SIL quoting and negotiation process used previously was replaced with price limits for SIL supports in 2020. Providers are now required to develop a roster of care using the NDIA's set price limits for activities of daily living and submit this to the NDIA for consideration. There is a focus around assessing the suitability of rosters of care for participants at first plan and for subsequent plan reviews.

In addition, in 2020 the NDIA published a SIL participant information pack and a SIL Operational Guideline to improve participant choice and control.

While these changes were designed to address immediate concerns, two further consultation papers were released to the public in late 2020 to seek feedback and input on how to ensure SIL delivers positive outcomes for participants into the future. The focus of these papers included proposed improvements to address operational, sustainability and participant experience challenges, as well as a review of the SIL cost model to better understand cost structures in the market.

Part Four: Providers and the growing market

The Report of the Review of Pricing Arrangements for Supported Independent Living (the report) recommended that the price limits for SIL supports should continue to be aligned with the price limits for other Assistance with Daily Life supports. [The Report is now available on the NDIS website.](#)

The NDIA recently held a workshop with large SIL providers to discuss longer-term alternatives to SIL, with the aim of improving outcomes, incentivising innovation in supports and improving sustainability. More consultation with participants and the sector is planned.

The NDIA is also looking at innovative living solutions which include more contemporary options for people who require a high level of support. Individual Living Options (ILO) have the potential to create a more tailored solution to care and support needs for Scheme participants, helping to increase choice and control for participants and improve outcomes. The NDIA recently published the ILO Guideline, explaining what ILO is, how ILO benefits participants and how the NDIA makes decisions about funding ILO supports. Further development and support for the implementation of ILO type models will occur in 2021.

Increase in prices

The NDIA has published changes to pricing arrangements and price limits, announced on 2 June 2021.

- The base price limits for supports delivered by disability support workers have increased by 2.95% from 1 July 2021 to take account of the Fair Work Commission's decision to increase minimum wages by 2.5% and the increase in the super guarantee percentage, from 9.5% to 10%.
- The price limits for specialist disability accommodation have increased by 1.1% based on the change in the consumer price index.
- The Temporary Transformation Payment loading has reduced from 6% to 4.5% as previously announced.
- Providers will be able to use the transitional pricing arrangements for group-based supports for a further 12 months.



The friendly face of Parliament House

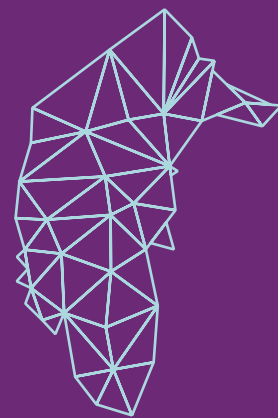
Canberra local **Daniel** admits when he finished high school in 2016, he had “no idea” what he would do for a job. Fast forward to 2020 and he’s now front-of-house at Australian Parliament House, working as part of the concierge team ensuring the public has smooth access to one of the nation’s greatest public buildings.

He’s also living independently and supporting himself for the first time, having recently moved out of the family home into shared rental accommodation. Not a bad outcome for any young adult, but for Daniel, 22, it’s a huge achievement given he lives with Aspergers syndrome and severe anxiety.

“I work with six or seven others on the concierge team and feel very well understood and supported,” he says.

Daniel has been a NDIS participant since 2016 and is supported by JCAL, which started training him in key workplace skills after he left school using the SLES funding in Daniel’s NDIS plan. JCAL CEO Deborah Lambourne says SLES programs give participants an array of key ‘soft’ skills fundamental to employment, including handling social interactions, preparing CVs and perfecting interview techniques, as well as opportunities to pick up work experience.

“Young people like Daniel come out of that program with increased confidence in a social setting and positive about what they can achieve, and from there we aim to get them into meaningful employment using our networks,” Ms Lambourne says.



Part Five: Financial sustainability



A financially sustainable Scheme achieves participant outcomes across their lifetimes, and is affordable now and into the future.

5.1 Participant and cost projections

The Agency released a comprehensive report on the financial sustainability of the Scheme on 3 July 2021. This report uses data as at 31 December 2020 to project the cost of the Scheme (and this projection is referred to as the 31 December 2020 update). The projection is higher than both the 2021-22 Portfolio Budget Statements (PBS) and the 2017 Productivity Commission (PC) projection.

Figure 62: Comparison of 31 December 2020 projection, 2021-22 PBS and the 2017 PC projection

Total participant costs (\$m)	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Total
2017 Productivity Commission Estimates (a)	23,708	25,238	26,839	28,500	104,286
Portfolio Budget Statements 2021-22 (b)	26,487	28,257	29,425	31,884	116,053
31 December 2020 update ³⁶ (c)	28,139	32,900	36,905	40,659	138,603
Difference (b-a)	2,779	3,019	2,586	3,384	11,767
Difference (c-a)	4,430	7,662	10,067	12,158	34,317

2017 Productivity Commission projection

The 2017 PC projection was higher than actual costs between 2017-18 and 2019-20. However, in 2020-21 actual costs were approximately \$1 billion higher than the 2017 PC projection (Figure 63).

Figure 63: Comparisons of actual participant costs with the 2017 PC projection

Total participant costs (\$m)	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
2017 Productivity Commission Estimates ³⁷	7,745	14,702	20,762	22,240
Actual participant costs (accrual)	5,418	10,460	17,589	23,234
Actual participant costs compared with 2017 PC estimates (without unanticipated costs)	-2,327	-4,242	-3,173	994

³⁶ The 31 December 2020 projection is documented in the interim update to the AFSR summary released in July 2021.

³⁷ The 2017 PC estimate did not include costs for children with developmental delay, school transport, personal care in schools, disability related health supports, or a National Injury Insurance Scheme (NIIS) offset for motor/workplace injuries only – these are referred to as “unanticipated costs”, and result in the 2017 PC estimate after allowing for unanticipated costs to be approximately \$500 million higher than actual costs in 2020-21.

Considering the key drivers of costs, that is, participant numbers and average payments per participant, the key driver in the difference between the 2017 PC projection and actual costs was higher participant numbers in the 2017 PC projection. Participant numbers in the 2017 PC projection remain slightly higher than actual numbers at 30 June 2021 (Figure 64). However, the average payment per participant has been higher than projected in each year since 2017-18, and the gap has widened over time (Figure 65). Hence, as projected participant numbers from the PC estimates align with the actual number of participants in the Scheme, the higher average payment per participant is driving total participant costs above projected levels.

More specifically, the quality of information provided in relation to participants transferred to the Scheme, along with fewer new participants than anticipated approaching the Scheme, resulted in lower than expected participant numbers from 2017-18 to 2019-20. This was exacerbated by under-developed processes and systems, inherited from the trial period, constraining the intake of participants by the NDIA (noting, immediately thereafter this required major redevelopment work by the NDIA as occurred through the participant pathway review, which was undertaken with deep engagement with participants). Further, line by line planning, as occurs with the current legislation has contributed to budgets (and consequently payments) increasing year on year.

Figure 64: Comparisons of actual participant numbers with the 2017 PC projection of participant numbers

Participant numbers	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
2017 Productivity Commission Estimates	264,100	447,300	473,700	485,900
Actual participant numbers	172,300	286,000	392,000	466,600
Actual participant numbers compared with 2017 PC estimates	-91,800	-161,300	-81,700	-19,300

Figure 65: Comparisons of actual average payments per participant with the 2017 PC projection of payments per participant

Average payment per participant (\$)	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
2017 Productivity Commission Estimates	40,000	41,000	45,000	46,000
Actual average payment per participant (accrual)	41,000	45,000	52,000	54,000
Actual average payment per participant compared with 2017 PC estimates	1,000	4,000	7,000	8,000

Portfolio Budget Estimates

Between 2016-17 and 2018-19, total Scheme costs trended well below the estimates in the PBS. This was primarily due to participants entering the Scheme more slowly than initially anticipated in the bilateral agreements between the Commonwealth and State/Territory governments. However, in 2019-20, Scheme costs exceeded the 2019-20 PBS for the first time (costs were \$17.6 billion compared with \$16.3 billion in the PBS). Costs in 2020-21 also exceeded the 2020-21 PBS (estimated to be \$23.2 billion compared with \$21.7 billion).

The 2021-22 PBS included an increase in future expenditure for 2021-22 onwards compared with the 2020-21 PBS (of \$12.0 billion).

Figure 66: Portfolio Budget Statements (PBS) and actual participant costs

Total participant costs (\$m)	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
PBS 2021-22						26,487	28,257	29,425	31,884
PBS 2020-21					21,720	23,807	24,022	24,315	
PBS 2019-20				16,262	20,903	22,116	23,361		
PBS 2018-19			15,139	19,537	21,064	22,300			
PBS 2017-18		8,045	14,267	17,856	19,165				
PBS 2016-17	3,487	8,813	15,905	20,077					
Actual participant costs (accrual)	2,238	5,418	10,460	17,589	23,234 ³⁸				
Actual participant costs compared with latest PBS	-1,249	-2,627	-4,679	1,327	1,514				

The estimates in the 2021-22 Portfolio Budget Statements now also exceed the estimates in the 2017 Productivity Commission study report by \$11.8 billion over the four years to 2024-25.

Figure 67: 2017 PC estimates compared with the 2021-22 PBS

Total participant costs (\$m)	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Total
2017 Productivity Commission Estimates	23,708	25,238	26,839	28,500	104,286
PBS 2021-22	26,487	28,257	29,425	31,884	116,053
Difference	2,779	3,019	2,586	3,384	11,767

The estimate for participant costs in 2021-22 in the 2021-22 PBS is \$26.5 billion. As at 30 June 2021, there are approximately 466,619 participants with an average actual annualised cost of \$54,300.³⁹ Assuming **no new participants** enter the Scheme and **average payment per participant does not grow**, the Scheme will spend \$25.3 billion over 2021-22. This already represents 96% of the Scheme's allocated budget from the 2021-22 PBS.

³⁸ Estimated actual participant costs as per the Portfolio Budget Statements 2021-22.

³⁹ Average payment for 2021-22.

Annual Financial Sustainability Reports

The Scheme Actuary of the NDIS is required to produce an annual financial sustainability report (AFSR) under section 180B of the NDIS Act. This report provides an assessment of the financial sustainability of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (“the Scheme”, or NDIS). The AFSR is produced using data at 30 June each year, and a summary of each year’s AFSR has been included in the NDIA annual report, as required under the NDIS Act. The rules for the Scheme Actuary outline the content required in the AFSR and stipulate that the report must have regard to the professional standards of the Institute of Actuaries of Australia.

Each year the report is peer-reviewed by the Peer Review Actuary. The Australian Government Actuary is the Peer Review Actuary. The interim report released in July 2021, using 31 December 2020 data, was also peer-reviewed by the Australian Government Actuary.

The NDIS has been in operation for eight years, with the first three years being the trial period, followed by a transition phase, with the Scheme being operational in all areas of Australia on 1 July 2020. At 30 June 2016, the Scheme included 30,000 participants. The Scheme then grew significantly, with the number of participants increasing by more than ten-fold to 390,000 participants at 30 June 2020 (four years later), and now includes 467,000 participants at 30 June 2021.

The projections in the AFSR will always contain uncertainty. With each update of the AFSR, projection assumptions balance both the emerging experience (considering the significance and duration of the trends), and future expectations. That is, the projections are not just extrapolations of past Scheme trends, rather a forward-looking approach is taken, which assumes operational initiatives undertaken by the NDIA will mean that past trends will not continue. Updates to assumptions are made accordingly, and consider both the significant growth in the Scheme over the past five years and the relative immaturity of the Scheme. As more data becomes available and as the Scheme continues to evolve, the projection of Scheme costs does as well.

With the Scheme starting slowly with 30,000 participants by the end of the third year (30 June 2016), and only increasing to 90,000 by 30 June 2017, the experience in the first four years did not provide enough evidence to re-forecast the Scheme (from the Productivity Commission estimate). However, the experience in the first four years of the Scheme indicated a number of emerging risks to sustainability. The 2015-16 AFSR summary⁴⁰ stated risks to the Scheme of:

- Higher than expected numbers of children entering the Scheme
- Increasing package costs over and above the impacts of inflation and ageing (“super-imposed” inflation)
- Potential participants continuing to approach the Scheme
- Lower than expected participants exiting the Scheme
- A mismatch between benchmark package costs and actual package costs.

These risks have persisted and have resulted in higher actual costs in recent years, as well as higher projected costs.

⁴⁰ <https://www.ndis.gov.au/about-us/publications/annual-report/annual-report-2015-16>

The 2017-18 AFSR (using data at 30 June 2018) included an experience-based projection to forecast Scheme costs, as have subsequent AFSR projections. Consequently, the projection has changed over time reflecting the emerging experience. Projections have been \$1bn (or less) lower than actual experience, resulting in projections being revised upwards in each subsequent projection. The changes in both estimates of participant numbers, average payments per participants, and total participants costs is outlined below.

Figure 68: Total participant costs – AFSR projections, 2017 PC estimates, 2021-22 PBS estimates, and actual costs

Total participant costs (\$bn)	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Actual participant costs								
Actual participant costs (accrual)	5.4	10.5	17.6	23.2				
PC estimates								
2017 Productivity Commission Estimates	7.7	14.7	20.8	22.2	23.7	25.2	26.8	28.5
2017 Productivity Commission Estimates (including unanticipated costs)			21.9	23.8	25.5	27.2	29.0	30.8
PBS								
PBS 2021-22					26.5	28.3	29.4	31.9
AFSR								
31 December 2020 update ⁴¹					28.1	32.9	36.9	40.7
30 June 2020 AFSR projection				22.3	26.1	28.9	31.4	34.3
31 December 2019 update ⁴²				21.8	25.4	28.5	31.4	34.2
30 June 2019 AFSR projection			16.7	21.1	24.2	26.9	28.9	30.8
30 June 2018 AFSR projection ⁴³		9.5	16.0	20.3	23.6	26.6	29.5	31.7
Comparison to actual participant costs								
Actual participant costs compared with AFSR		0.9	0.8	1.0				

⁴¹ The December 2019 and December 2020 updates use more up-to-date information to project Scheme costs in line with the AFSR projection model and methodology. These updates were undertaken post 30 June 2019 and post 30 June 2020, to reflect emerging experience at the time.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Projections have been adjusted from a cash basis to an accrual basis using accrual factors from the 30 June 2019 AFSR.

While a component of the increases in the AFSR projection over time is from a greater intake of participants than previously expected, particularly in regions that phased in during the trial period, the main driver is the average payment per participant which has continued to significantly increase.

Participant projections for each successive AFSR projection have been revised to reflect the pace at which participants have entered the Scheme. In the 31 December 2020 update, participant intake assumptions were revised upwards to reflect the emerging experience of elevated participant intake that has persisted in regions that phased into the Scheme during the trial period.

Figure 69: Participant numbers - AFSR projections, 2017 PC estimates, 2021-22 PBS estimates, and actual participant numbers

Participant numbers	2017 -18	2018 -19	2019 -20	2020 -21	2021 -22	2022 -23	2023 -24	2024 -25
Actual number of participants								
Actual participant numbers	172,300	286,000	392,000	466,600				
PC estimates								
2017 Productivity Commission Estimates	264,100	447,300	473,700	485,900	497,700	509,300	520,800	532,000
PBS								
PBS 2021-22				468,700	531,000	565,300	583,100	590,700
AFSR								
31 December 2020 update ⁴⁴				468,700	537,900	596,600	643,200	682,800
30 June 2020 AFSR projection			392,000	456,300	500,200	532,300	558,100	583,500
31 December 2019 update ⁴⁵			387,600	443,200	485,200	518,400	544,000	568,500
30 June 2019 AFSR projection		286,000	369,100	423,900	470,600	501,500	523,700	544,600
30 June 2018 AFSR projection	172,300	306,200	380,500	426,600	465,100	499,300	521,000	541,700
Comparison to actual participant numbers								
Actual participant numbers compared with AFSR		-20,200	22,900	10,300				

⁴⁴ The December 2019 and December 2020 updates use more up-to-date information to project Scheme costs in line with the AFSR projection model and methodology. These updates were undertaken post 30 June 2019 and post 30 June 2020, to reflect emerging experience at the time.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

Assumptions for average participant payments have been revised upwards for each successive AFSR projection. This reflects the emerging experience of sustained significant growth in actual average participant costs over an extended period of time. Despite these substantial increases, the AFSR projections have under-projected average payments in the following year. Projections have assumed operational initiatives would lead to reduced inflation in average payments over time – however, inflation has not subsided. Actual inflation and inflation assumptions are included in Figure 71. It is still assumed inflation in the future will not be as high as previous years.

Figure 70: Average payments - AFSR projections, 2017 PC estimates, 2021-22 PBS estimates, and actual average payments per participant

Average payment per participant (\$)	2017 -18	2018 -19	2019 -20	2020 -21	2021 -22	2022 -23	2023 -24	2024 -25
Actual average payment per participant								
Actual average participant payments (accrual)	41,000	46,000	52,000	54,000				
PC estimates								
2017 Productivity Commission Estimates	40,000	41,000	45,000	46,000	48,000	50,000	52,000	54,000
2017 Productivity Commission Estimates (including unanticipated costs)			48,000	50,000	52,000	54,000	56,000	59,000
PBS								
PBS 2021-22					53,000	52,000	51,000	54,000
AFSR⁴⁶								
31 December 2020 update ⁴⁷					56,000	58,000	60,000	61,000
30 June 2020 AFSR projection				53,000	55,000	56,000	58,000	60,000
31 December 2019 update ⁴⁸				53,000	55,000	57,000	59,000	61,000
30 June 2019 AFSR projection			51,000	53,000	54,000	55,000	56,000	58,000
30 June 2018 AFSR projection ⁴⁹		40,000	47,000	50,000	53,000	55,000	58,000	60,000
Comparison with actual average payment per participant								
Actual average participant payments compared with AFSR		6,000	1,000	1,000				

⁴⁶ The average payment per participant is effected by the mix of participants. As an example, more children relative to adults results in a lower overall average payment per participant. The mix of participants is different in each AFSR projection.

⁴⁷ The December 2019 and December 2020 updates use more up-to-date information to project Scheme costs in line with the AFSR projection model and methodology. These updates were undertaken post 30 June 2019 and post 30 June 2020, to reflect emerging experience at the time.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁹ Projections have been adjusted from a cash basis to an accrual basis using accrual factors from the 30 June 2019 AFSR

Figure 71: Actual and assumed rates of inflation in average payments per participant

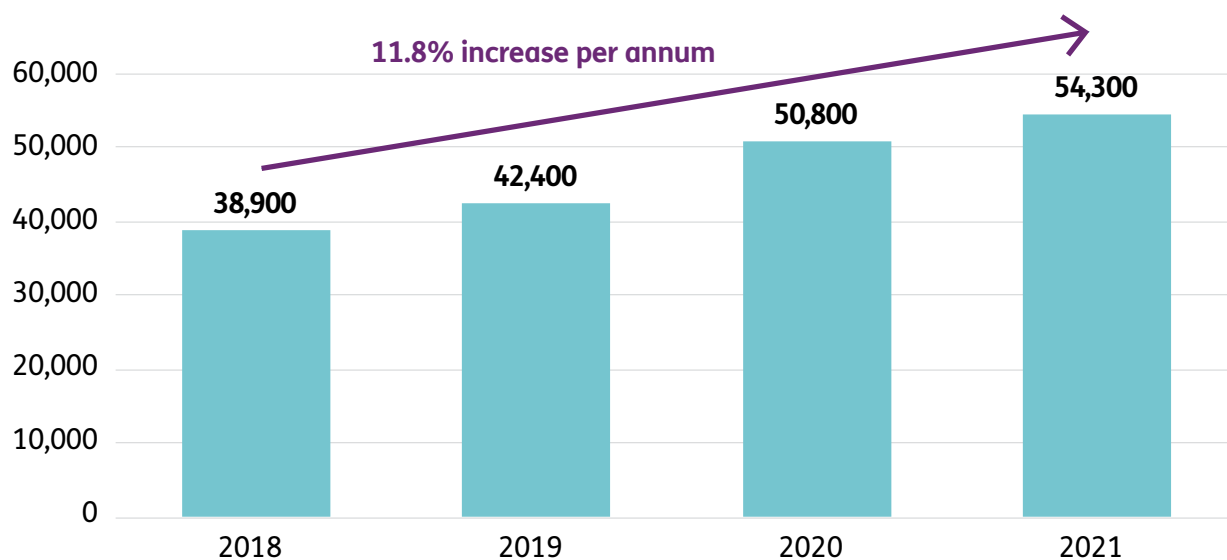
Inflation rate assumptions	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
31 December 2020 update ⁵⁰				5.6%	6.8%	5.3%	4.7%
30 June 2020 AFSR projection			6.1%	4.6%	4.2%	4.8%	5.0%
31 December 2019 update ⁵¹			5.5%	5.8%	4.9%	4.6%	4.5%
30 June 2019 AFSR projection		12.2%	3.6%	4.1%	3.8%	3.6%	3.4%
30 June 2018 AFSR projection	8.8%	6.8%	5.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%
Actual inflation experience as at 31 March	8.5%	21.1%	8.2%				

Experience to 30 June 2021

As noted above, the AFSR projection is not an extrapolation of past trends. Instead, assumptions have been set using a forward-looking approach. Specifically, payment trends over the past four years have been higher than projections. The average payment per participant has continued to increase at 11.8 per cent in the three years to 30 June 2021.

Further, the average payment per participant has increased from \$52,300 in the six months to 30 June 2021 to \$55,900 (or 6.8 per cent higher⁵²). The high growth in average payment per participant has persisted in the most recent six months.

Figure 72: Average payments per year (\$)



⁵⁰ The December 2019 and December 2020 updates use more up-to-date information to project Scheme costs in line with the AFSR projection model and methodology. These updates were undertaken post 30 June 2019 and post 30 June 2020, to reflect emerging experience at the time.

⁵¹ *ibid.*

⁵² The \$55,900 differs from the \$54,300 in Fig 72, as the \$55,900 is only related to the second half of 2020-21, and not the full year.

Over the past four years, the mix of participants in the Scheme has changed. That is, as the Scheme has rolled out across the country, the proportion of participants by different characteristics has changed. As examples, the proportion of children in the Scheme is higher in 2020-21 compared with 2017-18, and the proportion of SIL participants in the Scheme is lower in 2020-21 compared with 2017-18.

Analysing the change in average payment over time by whether or not participants are in SIL, indicates that the average annual increase in average payment has been consistently high across both participant groups. Specifically, the average payment has increased for SIL participants by 12.0 per cent, and the average annual payment has increased for non-SIL participants by 17.1 per cent per year. These averages are higher than the overall average (of 11.8 per cent), as the proportion of participants in SIL has decreased over the period.

Figure 73: Average payments per year – SIL (\$)

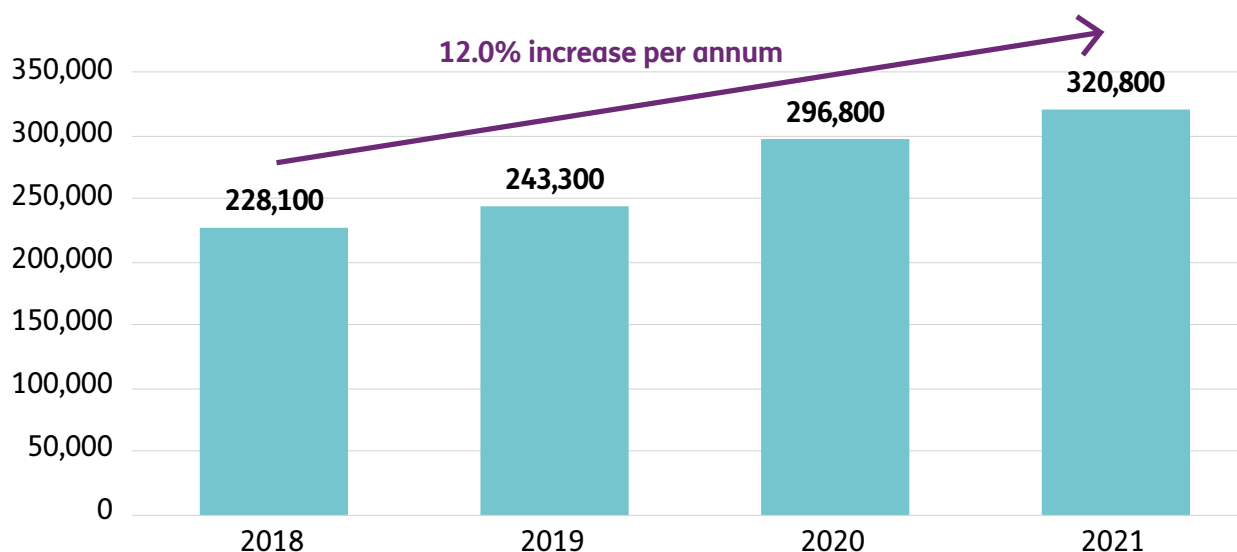
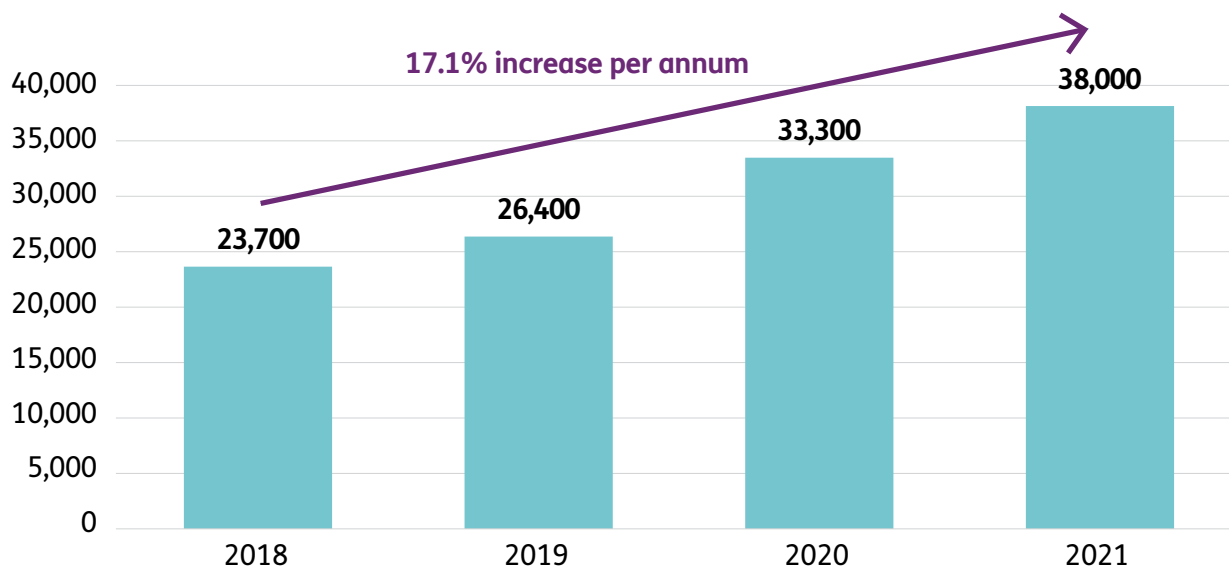
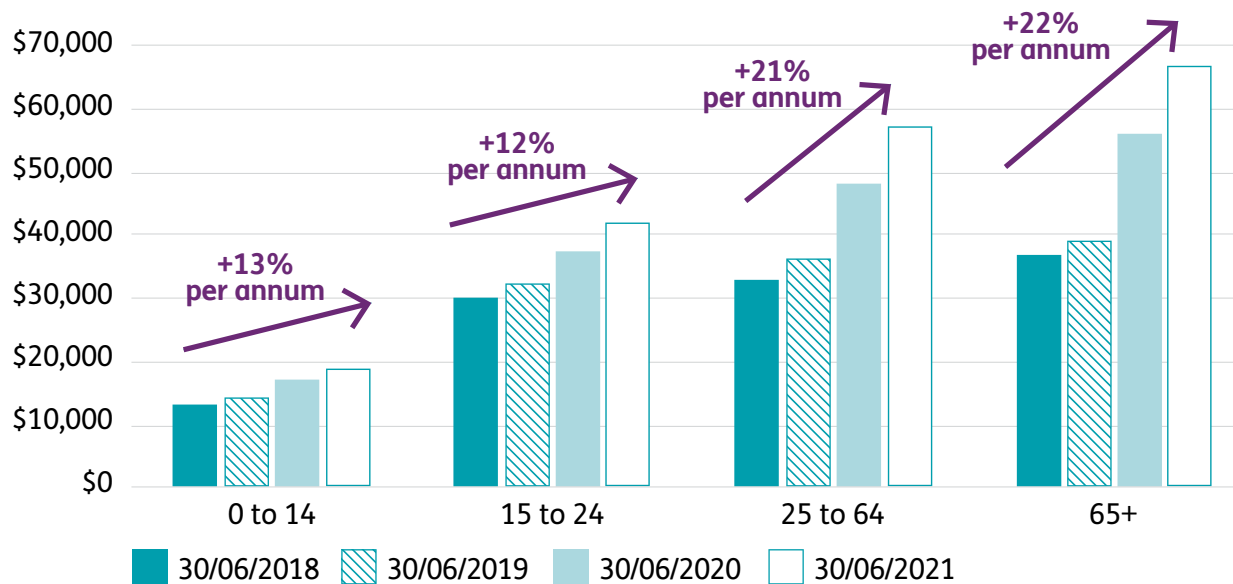


Figure 74: Average payments per year – Non-SIL (\$)



The figure below analyses the change in average payment over time by age band for participants not in SIL. The average increase for 0 to 14 year olds is 13 per cent, for 15 to 24 year olds it is 12 per cent, for 25 to 64 year olds it is 21 per cent, and for participants aged over 65 it is 22 per cent. For participants not in SIL, average payments have increased at a faster rate for adults (those aged over 25) and reflects a material increase in the hours of attendant care support these participants are receiving over time.

Figure 75: Average payments per year - by age bands (non-SIL) (\$)



Sustained significant growth in average participant costs will continue to place significant pressure on Scheme sustainability and long-term affordability. As mentioned elsewhere in this report, the NDIA is committed to working with the disability sector, and governments on this issue of affordability, so the Scheme remains affordable now and into the future.



Rosie's sporting life leading onto the green and gold

For as long as she can remember, **Rosie**, 19, from Shellharbour, south of Wollongong, has loved sport. Now she's making her mark on the rugby field and the national athletics stage, and hopes to be wearing the green and gold before too much longer.

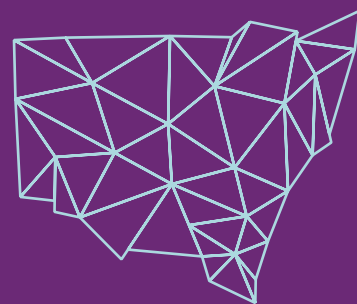
Rosie is already the New South Wales women's Under 20 champion in Paralympic shotput and has her sights firmly set on competing at the Virtus Global Games happening in Vichy, France, in 2023, the pinnacle sporting event for athletes with an intellectual disability which takes place every four years.

Rosie has both a moderate intellectual disability and autism and has been supported by the NDIS since 2018, her final year at school.

Rosie puts her sporting achievements down to the encouragement and coaching she received from her father John at an early age. "Even before I started primary school I was already playing soccer, then soon after I started school I joined the Nippers program at my local surf club and started doing athletics," she says.

Rosie has trained with the Illawarra Academy of Sport (IAS) for several years and in October she was chosen for the IAS's Athletes with a Disability program, which offers 12-month scholarships for high-performing athletes.

When not training, Rosie is using her SLES funding from the NDIS to build her work skills. She does work experience from Monday to Thursday each week and recently obtained her L's with support from an NDIS-funded occupational therapist.



Part Six:

Staff, advisory groups and the NDIS community



The NDIA is committed to working to improve engagement with participants and the sector.

6.1 A high performing NDIA

Staff and partners continue strengthen and develop their capability.

As at 30th June 2021, the total NDIS workforce was 11,360, including 4,313 Australian Public Service (APS) employees, 1,555 labour-hire workers and contractors and 5,492 people employed by the NDIA's Partners in the Community (PiTC) and Contact Centre Partners.

To meet participant demand and become a better NDIA, large-scale recruitment activities were completed during the quarter with many planner vacancies filled across all States and Territories. There were 519 engagements made with 15 per cent of these being people with disability. Further vacancies were filled in the National Access and Review Branch (103 engagements) with 11 per cent of these being people with disability. The successful candidates included a mix of both external applicants and existing internal staff.

The 2021 APS Census was open from 10 May 2021 to 11 June 2021. The Agency response rate was 83 per cent with 4,237 of the workforce (APS employee and labour hire workers) participating. This is around 6 per cent higher than the APS average response rate. The engagement from staff in completing the survey shows a positive desire to improve the Agency. The results will be available next quarter.

This quarter, the Agency was recognised as the top performer in the 2020 Australian Network on Disability (AND) Access and Inclusion Index (Index) with a score of 87 out of 100. AND is a national, membership based, for-purpose organisation and the Index is Australia's foremost benchmarking tool for inclusion of people with disability. The Agency participates in the Index to understand, benchmark and improve our disability confidence to better meet the needs of our Participants and staff with disability. The Index result reflects the significant work undertaken across the Agency to meet the needs of our Participants and staff with disability.

The NDIA has continued to develop its frontline employees' capability. The emphasis is shifting from improving frontline skills in making reasonable and necessary decisions to continuing to build the interpersonal and communication skills of Agency staff.

To further support improving participant experience, an interpersonal skills uplift program is being developed. It will include three core communication skills eLearning modules. The modules will be supported by a participant-focused, scenario-based Team Leader pack. An emotional Intelligence eLearning module will support the overall learning.

The Alternative Cloud Environment (ACE) is a replacement for the Customer Relationship Management system (CRM). Significant development work is underway to finalise ACE Case Release 1. Further training will be developed once processes, systems and user testing has been finalised.

The Continuous Improvement Connect (CI Connect) program is designed to provide opportunities for teams to build capability and lift organisational performance. This will be achieved by utilising quality audit reporting, hotspot reports and key focus areas to make informed decisions on priorities for the next quarter. This targeted approach to topic/theme prioritisation will ensure content produced for the program is timely in addressing the needs of the NDIA and participants. Specifically, content produced for the program aims to improve consistency of practice across the Participant Experience Delivery group to ultimately improve participant experience. CI Connect was launched across the NDIA from May 2021, starting with R&N Justification. All survey respondents found the learning material relevant to their role and provided excellent information on the topic.

Collectively, these initiatives provide the foundation for continued building of capability and further progress towards a high performing NDIA.

6.2 Valued input from the Independent Advisory Council

The IAC is working closely with the NDIA management and NDIA Board. The IAC have delivered the following formal advice to the NDIA Board during the 2020-21 Financial year for which the NDIA is actively progressing programs of work to address:

- Promoting best practice in early childhood intervention
- Supporting Local Area Coordinators (LACs) to be LACs
- NDIS support for participants who are parents
- Supports for families and carers
- Choice and control to safely live a good life of belonging and citizenship
- Strengthening Scheme reforms to access and planning

The IAC continues to work actively with the NDIA on a variety of Corporate Plan priorities and the IAC's own plan of work, including:

- Scheme reforms to access and planning
- Autism early intervention
- Home and living
- The participant satisfaction survey
- The Agency's research and evaluation work plan
- Support for Decision making
- Psychosocial Disability Recovery Framework
- Scheme Work of the Future

6.3 Engagement initiatives

Participant, provider and sector engagement continues.

The Agency has released a number of papers for engagement and additional consultation throughout the year. These include:

- Access and eligibility policy with independent assessments⁵³
- Planning policy for personalised budgets and plan flexibility
- Supporting young children and their families early, to reach their full potential
- Interventions for children on the autism spectrum
- Home and Living – An ordinary life at home
- Support for Decision Making – Supporting you to make your own decisions

The NDIA will continue to work in partnership with those with lived disability experience on the design of a person-centred model for the assessments required under the National Disability Insurance Scheme 2013 Act. A revised approach to assessments aims to deliver consistency and equity to access and planning decisions for NDIS participants.

6.4 Public data sharing and the latest release of information

This quarter the NDIA released two new deep dive reports about participants with sensory disability and neurodegenerative conditions.

As part of the NDIA's commitment to publicly share data, the NDIA released the latest set of data on 23 June 2021.

On 1 July 2021, the NDIA released two new deep dive reports about **participants with a sensory disability in the NDIS** and **participants with neurodegenerative conditions**.

Both reports are divided into four sections and cover participant characteristics, participant experience of the NDIS, plan supports and payments for supports, as well as participant goals, outcomes and satisfaction. The purpose of these reports is to provide detailed information about the experiences of these groups of participants, to help the NDIA, sector, providers and other interested parties understand how to work best to assist in improving outcomes.

In addition, the NDIA continues to publish quarterly updates to the SDA demand and supply data on the NDIS Data and Insights website. This data release is part of the NDIA's commitment to publish additional SDA data for participants and the sector. It supports participants and providers to understand not only the current SDA supply but where the demand for SDA is greatest, and where there are opportunities to increase SDA supply. The SDA data is current as at 30 June 2021.

⁵³ Independent assessments are no longer going ahead, and the NDIA supports this decision.

Several “deep dive” reports and analyses have also been released in previous quarters, and include:

Participant groups:

- participants with autism spectrum disorder (ASD)
- people with a psychosocial disability in the NDIS
- people with an intellectual disability in the NDIS
- participants with acquired brain injury, cerebral palsy or spinal cord injury
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants
- CALD participants
- analysis of participants by gender
- young people in the NDIS
- participants by remoteness classification

Outcomes and goals:

- outcomes report for participants, and an outcomes report for families/carers (30 June 2018, 30 June 2019, and 30 June 2020)
- employment in the NDIS
- people with disability and their NDIS goals
- COVID-19 impact on participants and family/carers outcomes

The NDIS market:

- the NDIS Market (30 June 2019, 31 December 2019, 30 June 2020, and 31 December 2020)
- the NDIS Market by Local Government Area (LGA) (31 December 2019, 30 June 2020, and 31 December 2020)

6.5 Cyber Security and Fraud

NDIA Cyber Security is working proactively to identify the most likely and most significant threats and risks and implement control measures to manage risk.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has resulted in a significant increase in online traffic. This has the potential to open areas of vulnerability to cyber events, or incidents that can impact the Agency. The most likely sources of risk remain organised crime gangs who possess or procure the means with which to conduct cyber incidents/events, utilising ransomware to extort funds. The Agency continues to collaborate across Government to leverage existing capabilities, to ensure those risks are addressed.

As published in the previous quarterly report, the Australian Secret Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) notification that health services and allied organisations are targets for cybercrime groups, remains in force. This is likely to continue for the foreseeable future as Foreign Intelligence Services seek to obtain Australian health intellectual property.

The Agency's most significant external risk remains from State/s backed entities seeking Participant information. A rising trend has been attempts to use compromised/stolen Participant information to commit payment fraud. Continual communication with Providers is essential to raise and maintain cyber awareness, and promote sound cyber hygiene practices.

The NDIA Protective & Cyber Security area conducts regular communications with staff and Partners to maintain awareness of phishing emails. NDIA Cyber Security are conducting an assurance exercise (anti-phishing email campaign) to determine the effectiveness of these communications and make continual improvements.

The NDIA continues to invest in Fraud and Compliance

As mentioned previously in this report, the NDIS Fraud Taskforce (established 2018) has enabled the Agency to develop effective detection of, and response to, fraud against the Scheme. The investigation function has matured, with successful investigations completed or currently before the courts.

Incidence of fraud has the potential to erode public confidence in the Scheme. As at 30 June 2021, there were 29 fraud investigations in progress and a further six matters being evaluated for possible investigation. Of these nine matters are currently before the courts.

The NDIS Fraud Taskforce has been extended indefinitely, allowing the joint activity of the Agency, Australian Federal Police and Services Australia to continue focusing on serious and organised fraud against the Scheme.

The NDIS Fraud Taskforce commenced Operation Pegasus in May 2020. On 20 April 2021, the AFP executed 10 search warrants across Western Sydney in partnership with the NDIA and Services Australia. Five people were arrested and charged with a range of Commonwealth fraud offences and ongoing enquiries are expected to result in the charging of a potential sixth key offender.

The nature of this fraud was complex and involved activities which involved exploitation of existing participants, collusion with existing participants or their families/ nominees, and falsified identities and medical evidence. The Agency is undertaking a range of initiatives to mitigate any ongoing risks identified in Operation Pegasus.

The Agency also conducts a range of compliance activities. In 2020-21 the Agency undertook more than 2,800 compliance activities. These included targeted and proactive engagement to treat payment risks through opportunistic and non-compliant behaviour from providers, plan management agencies, and participants identified through tip-offs.

The Agency continues to increase its fraud and compliance detection maturity, through ongoing refinement in data analytics, data matching and advanced analytics to proactively detect potential fraud and non-compliance behaviour from providers, participants and plan management agents.



Matt's on top of the world and 'free' again, thanks to NDIS

After a dirt bike accident left him a complete quadriplegic 14 years ago, **Matt** never dreamed he'd be back doing what he loves most, riding bumpy mountain trails or trekking long distances through the wilderness. But that's exactly what he's been doing lately, and he says, it's all thanks to the NDIS.

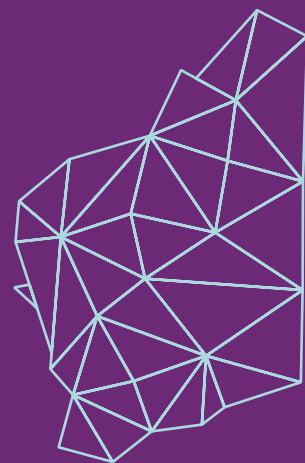
"I thought that part of my life was over," said Matt, 41, of Tom Price, Western Australia. "I thought that everything was going to be via wheelchair with someone helping me. And for many years, that's what it was."

Since joining the NDIS, Matt says he has a new lease on life. "The NDIS has given me back my control and independence," he said. "It's made a huge impact on my life and my family. It has been a massive turnaround."

Matt grew up loving the outdoors and riding and touring around the countryside. His desire to do that didn't change after his accident, but, he says, access did. Now with an NDIS-funded Batec, a power-assisted handbike, Matt recently traversed about 30 kilometres of rocky terrain through the John Forest National Park.

"It's the first time in nearly 14 years I've felt that I've got hold of the world, I was free to feel the breeze through such a nice forest. We travelled through the tunnel, then along the dirt, sand, and muddy tracks over hills, bumps and humps.

"Freedom, that's what it feels like being able to do something on your own again, just freedom."





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