



Q1
2019-2020

COAG Disability Reform Council
Quarterly Report
30 September 2019

ndis

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Key highlights

311,774 people with disability are being supported by the Scheme:

26,688

joined the Scheme this quarter

114,069

are receiving supports for the first time

The NDIA has met **114%** of its operational target for participants plans this quarter

Supporting children, earlier:

37%

of new participants this quarter were aged 0-6 – **9,883 children**

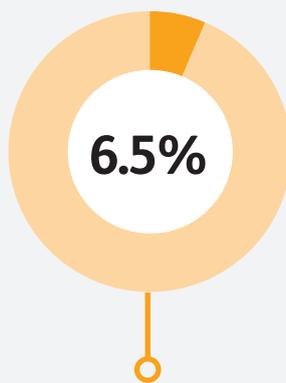


Wait times for children to access the Scheme have **halved** over the quarter

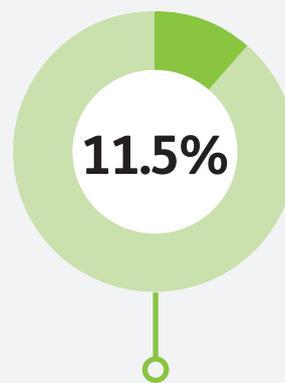
44,907

Scheme participants are aged 0-6

Participants are increasingly diverse:



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

Key highlights

Participants in the Scheme for **three** years show significantly improved outcomes:

100%

of parents and carers thought that the NDIS improved their child's development - for children aged 0 to 6 years

↑13%

increase in independence for participants starting school to aged 14

↑12%

increase in community and social participation for participants aged 15 to 24

↑11%

increase in choice and control for participants aged 25 and over



Call centre performance has continued to improve with **82%** of calls answered within **60 seconds**.



88% of enquiries resolved within the first response.



Overall, participant satisfaction is high at **87%**.

Executive Summary

The NDIS continues to improve the lives of Australians living with disability, their families and carers, through improved participant outcomes.

While there is more work to do, this report highlights that there are now over 310,000 Australians receiving supports from the Scheme including more than 114,000 receiving support for the very first time. Scheme participants are increasingly reflective of a diverse Australia.

1. Participants

1.1 Growing participant numbers

As at 30 September 2019 there were 311,774 participants with an approved plan across Australia.¹ 114,069 people, which is 37% of Scheme participants, are receiving disability supports for the first time. 26,688 participants joined the Scheme and received an approved plan this quarter.

1.2 Supporting children faster

Of the additional participants this quarter almost 9,883 (37%) were children aged 0-6. Reducing the time children are waiting for support was a significant focus of the Agency over the quarter, and continues to be a key focus.

Over the quarter we also saw significant reductions in Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) wait lists with the number of children waiting more than 50 days for a plan reducing from 3,314 to 1,686 over the quarter, and the average wait time for children to receive their first plan halving over the quarter from 104 to 54 days.²

The number of children waiting for more than 50 days further decreased by mid-October to 1,493 and the average wait time to first plan had fallen to 48 days.

The NDIA has invested significant resources to improve timeliness to support children. At 30 September 2019, there were 44,907 children aged 0-6 years with an approved plan and 8,882 children were in the ECEI gateway (of which 1,784 (20%) had already commenced receiving initial supports).

1.3 Reducing other waiting times

In addition to the focus on children this quarter the NDIS delivered other reductions in wait times for first plan approvals and access decisions:

- As at 30 September 2019, outstanding access decisions had been in progress for an average of 12 days. This compares with 38 days at 30 June 2019.
- Similar to access decisions, first plans are being approved more quickly after an access decision has been made (88 days on average in September compared to 133 days in June).

Participant and provider complaints have also been tracking downwards, with participant complaints at 5.4% of access requests in the quarter compared with 7.0% a year ago, and provider complaints at 3.8% of access requests in the quarter compared with 5.4% a year ago.

Both participant complaints (as a proportion of access requests) and provider complaints (as a proportion of registered providers) are at their lowest levels for more than two years.

¹ With the exception of the Cocos Islands and Christmas Island which will phase into the Scheme from 1 July 2020.

² As at 19 October the number of children waiting more than 50 days had decreased further to 1493 and the average wait times for children with a first plan in progress had reduced to 48 days.

1.4 Participants are increasingly diverse

Of the 26,688 participants (excluding children receiving initial supports in the ECEI gateway) joining the Scheme this quarter, there was an increase in the diversity of participants. This is reflective of tailored Service Delivery and engagement strategies being implemented through the pathways program of work.

This quarter specifically:

- **Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders:** 6.5% of participants who received a plan in the quarter, compared with 5.8% in previous quarters combined.³
- **Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD):** 11.5% of participants who received a plan in the quarter, compared with 8.4% in previous quarters combined.
- A higher proportion of participants with psychosocial disability also entered the Scheme this quarter (10% this quarter compared with 9% in previous quarters combined).

1.5 The NDIA exceeded its operating target

Over the quarter around 90,000 plans were completed, which is 114% of the operational target. The 90,000 plans completed includes both first plans and a large number of plan reviews (64,309 plan reviews).⁴

The Agency continues to process actionable records. Actionable records relate to those people who could be contacted, who met the access requirements and whose records were provided to the Agency. At 30 September 2019, the NDIA was 80,000 State/Territory and Commonwealth actionable records short of the bilateral estimate.⁵

Compared with the bilateral estimate, the number of new people requesting to access the Scheme now exceeds the bilateral estimate of new participants by

42,000, recognising that people continue to approach to test their access, with the Scheme expected to reach about 500,000 participants within the next five years.

1.6 Improving the planning experience

Specific priorities for next quarter to further improve the participant planning experience include:

- Ensuring participants get timely access to the Assistive Technology (AT) supports they need by further streamlining processes and modifying quoting requirements.
- Continuation of the joint planning initiative. In joint planning meetings, the participant, Local Area Coordinator, and NDIA planner collectively discuss the participants plan and included supports before the plan is approved. Feedback from the soft launch of this initiative indicates that participants who have a joint planning meeting utilise the plan funds more quickly following plan approval.

2. Participant outcomes continue to be encouraging

Participant outcomes continue to improve.

There is now longitudinal analysis of a sample of participants who have been in the Scheme for three years. For participants who entered the Scheme between 1 July 2016 and 30 September 2016, community and social participation continues to increase (from 35% when participants entered the Scheme, to 38% after one year in Scheme, 46% after two years in the Scheme, and 50% after three years in the Scheme). These participants were also asked 'Has the NDIS helped?' after one, two and three years in Scheme, allowing the NDIA to gain further understanding of the longer-term impact.

³ Table E.6 in the Appendices has detail of the participant profile by quarter for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants.

⁴ Note: the number of first plans included in the comparison to the operational target (19,279) is less than the number of participants who received an approved plan this quarter (26,688). This is because some participants who received an approved plan this quarter were previously in the ECEI gateway and hence were not counted in the operational target for the quarter.

⁵ 30 June 2019 transition bilateral estimates are compared with actionable records.

Some highlights include:

- For children starting school to 14 years; 68% of parents and carers felt their child had become more independent as a result of the NDIS in their third year of participation, compared to 64% in their second year and 55% in their first year.
- For young adults aged 15 to 24 years; 69% of participants said the NDIS had helped them with daily living activities in their third year of participation, compared to 66% in their second year and 62% in their first year.
- For adults aged 25 and over; 79% of participants believed the NDIS helped them have more choice and more control over their lives in the third year of participation in the NDIS, compared to 74% in their second year and 69% in their first year.

Participation in work remains at similar levels, 25% after 2 years in the Scheme compared to 24% at entry. The NDIS Participant Employment Strategy will guide the activities of the NDIA over the next three years and help it achieve its Corporate Plan goal of 30% of participants in paid work by 2023.

Overall Participant satisfaction also remains high with 87% of participants rating their planning experience as 'good' or 'very good'.

3. Information, linkage and capacity building (ILC) and improved interfaces with mainstream services

A key focus for the COAG Disability Reform Council (DRC) is for Commonwealth and States and Territories to actively work together to deliver meaningful progress on policy issues that will improve the NDIS experience for participants, their families and carers. The NDIA Board and Agency has worked closely with the COAG DRC to deliver clarity and a better experience for participants.

3.1 Disability Related Health Supports

At the June 2019 DRC meeting, Commonwealth and State and Territory Disability Ministers clarified the boundaries between the NDIS and health-related services to ensure NDIS participants receive the supports they need. From 1 October 2019, NDIS participants commenced receiving funding for the disability-related health supports they need as a direct result of their disability, and as part of their daily life, through their NDIS plans.

For the participants who require disability related health supports, most will have these included in their initial NDIS plan or at their next plan review. The Agency has released an Operational Guideline and also updated the 2019-20 Price Guide and Support Catalogue to include around 90 disability-related health supports now funded under the NDIS.

3.2 Further mainstream interface improvements

A number of additional interface improvement initiatives were also announced at the 10 October 2019 DRC meeting. These include:

- A commitment to improve access and experiences for participants with psychosocial disability in the NDIS, as well as to address interface issues between the NDIS and mainstream mental health systems.
- The introduction of Justice Liaison Officers by the NDIS to work across state and territory justice systems. Their role will be to provide a single point of contact for workers within state and territory justice systems to coordinate support for NDIS participants in youth and adult justice systems.

- An approach to improve transport supports provided under the NDIS.
- Working closely with states and territories to develop and implement a new approach to maintaining critical supports with a focus on holistic service delivery arrangements which are participant-centric and based on the principle of choice and control.

3.3 Information, linkage and capacity building (ILC)

The Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) component of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) aims to build the capacity of people with disability in Australia to achieve their goals and for them to be included in all aspects of community life.

The Individual Capacity Building Program (ICBP) opened on 19 August 2019 with up to \$100 million (excl. GST) available, including \$50 million this financial year. The ICBP builds on the extensive evidence base for the use of peer support in building skills for people with disability.

The ICBP focuses on a national network of organisations run by and for people with disability, or their families and carers, becoming the primary delivery mechanism for the Agency for peer support, mentoring and other skills building for people with disability, carers and families. This grant round is currently under assessment with results to be announced in December 2019.

The Mainstream Capacity Building Program (MCBP) and Economic and Community Participation (ECP) Program both opened on 9 September 2019 with up to \$64 million and \$58 million (excl. GST) respectively available. 60% of these funds are available this financial year.

4. Encouraging an innovative market

4.1 Active providers

The number of providers supporting participants increased by 797 in the September quarter to 13,434, an increase of 6%, with relatively higher growth in assistive technology providers including vision, hearing and communication providers. The NDIA is committed to improving access to AT, through removing quoting for low cost items and making it easier to arrange urgent repairs.

4.2 Pricing

In addition to the price increases on 1 July 2019 for attendant care and therapy, the NDIA has released the NDIS Pricing Strategy and the NDIS Efficient Cost Model for Disability Support Workers. The Efficient Cost Model estimates the full costs, to an efficient provider, of engaging workers covered by the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award 2010 (SCHADS Award).

This quarter the NDIA also published reports on the WA Market Review and the Therapy Services Review, which were both conducted in early 2019.

4.3 Access to market data

This quarter, the NDIA also released comprehensive market data on regions in Australia in order to further promote transparency, and encourage better participant outcomes.

Comprehensive data on utilisation, market concentration and participant choice and control, by geographical regions, participant characteristics, and support categories was released. The intent of this is to enable participants and providers to better understand investment opportunities and encourage strategies to address thin markets.

Overall, the metrics indicate further investment in remote and very remote regions is required to better achieve participant outcomes. As part of market stewardship the NDIA has rolled out a number of initiatives to drive market growth including:

- Pricing increases from 1 July 2019, including remote loading of 40 per cent (increased from 20 per cent) and very remote loading of 50 per cent (increased from 25 per cent)
- An increased cap in provider travel claiming from 45 minutes to 60 minutes in regional areas
- An hourly rate for non-face-to-face care activities conducted on behalf of the participant.
- \$10 million in grants for the Jobs and Markets fund announced in August 2019, to help address under-supplied markets in the NDIS.
- A range of reforms to build confidence in the Specialist Disability Accommodation market including changes to rules, policies, pricing and payment settings announced in August.
- A range of Community Connector initiatives are currently taking place in the Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia. These initiatives target remote and very remote areas and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities within them. The Remote Community Connector Program is a cultural brokerage initiative which aims to engage, inform and assist participants from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds and rural and remote communities through the NDIS pathway process.

5. Stakeholder engagement is increasing

5.1 Board and senior engagement with the State and Territory governments

The NDIA Chairman and Acting CEO have been undertaking a program of engagement activities with every State and Territory Disability Minister and their senior officials. The objective of these meetings is to better understand, and develop responses to, jurisdictional specific issues. It is recognised that there are specific issues that are dependent on location, and existing jurisdictional service arrangements. Meetings were also held with participant and provider groups.

Key themes emerging from these engagements include: lower than expected utilisation of plans, challenges related to thin markets and the need to effectively respond to crisis situations.

The NDIA will now work with State and Territory groups on programs of work that responds to these local challenges and pressures.

5.2 Roundtable discussions

The Prime Minister and the Minister for the NDIS have undertaken a series of roundtables across the country meeting with participants, carers, sector stakeholders and providers over the last quarter. The roundtables provide the opportunity for participants and other stakeholders to discuss their NDIS experiences and ideas for further improving the Scheme.

5.3 Public data sharing policy

The NDIA released its Public Data Sharing Policy on 30 September 2019. The policy includes information of how data is shared with participants, providers and other stakeholders.

5.4 Insights forums

The NDIA hosted Insights forums across four capital cities in July and August. The Insights Forums were designed to bring together representatives of peak bodies, providers, academics and government stakeholders for the purpose of sharing information. The presentations included key data accumulated on the Scheme so far and explored what it means in terms of challenges and future opportunities. The Insights Forums laid strong foundations for future collaboration and innovation.

5.5 Data and insights website

On 30 July 2019, the NDIA released the Data and Insights webpages on ndis.gov.au. Data in the form of data cubes and synthesised reports (including Participant and Family/Carer Outcome reports) was released this quarter and the material shared at the Insights forums was published. The second tranche of data was also released this quarter on 30 September 2019, and included interactive maps and tables, as well as additional data cubes and synthesised reports (including the NDIS market report discussed above).

There have been over 10,000 total visits to the Data and Insights section by 7,200 individuals this quarter.

6. Scheme sustainability

Since the commencement of the Scheme, there has been a large increase in the number of participants, the amount of support committed in plans, and payments to providers on behalf of participants each year, reflecting the rapid roll-out of the NDIS. From 2017-18 to 2018-19, participants increased by 66%, committed support increased by 88%, and payments increased by 86%.

The Scheme is projected to continue to grow and to reach about 500,000 participants within the next five years, and is forecast to cost 1.2% of GDP. Participant numbers and costs are in line with the estimates shown in the 2017 Productivity Commission report on National Disability Insurance Scheme Costs at 2022-23, after allowing for costs not included in the Productivity Commission estimate, such as the introduction of school transport, personal care in schools, developmental delay and the incomplete implementation of the National Injury Insurance Scheme.

7. A high performing NDIA

The Honourable Stuart Robert MP, the Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme, announced that the NDIA will be filling an additional 800 Australian Public Service positions capable of exercising delegations under the NDIS legislation, over the course of the 2019-20 financial year, taking the APS Average Staffing Level to 4,000 from 1 July 2020.

Increased training is being provided to staff and partners to improve the participant experience. During the quarter, approximately 800 new planners and Local Area Coordinators participated in the 6-week New Starter Induction Program that includes:

- disability-specific training;
- agency-specific training, including work health and safety, fraud awareness and NDIA induction; and
- service delivery specific training on the participant pathway. This includes reasonable and necessary supports, typical support packages, mainstream support interfaces, housing, in-kind funding, school leaver employment support, self-management and Assistive Technology.

The NDIA Board and Agency recognises the need to do more and is collaborating with peak bodies and other stakeholders to develop additional training material.

The NDIA Board has appointed a new CEO, Mr Martin Hoffman, to lead the Agency. Martin has extensive experience in both the public and private sectors leading service delivery and digital transformation. Martin starts on 4 November 2019.

The NDIA Board acknowledges the invaluable leadership of Ms Vicki Rundle PSM, who has acted as CEO since April this year. The Board of the NDIA is indebted to Vicki for her leadership, dedication and commitment.

In conclusion

Participants, their families and carers, along with the community, are experiencing improved outcomes and better lives.

Introduction

This report is a summary of the performance and operations of the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) for the 3 months from 1 July 2019 to 30 September 2019, 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 region, 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 region receiving Special Disability Accommodation and Supported Independent Living, along with data on the number and types of dwellings in each region (Appendix P)

A comparison of utilisation by region (Appendix Q)

Waiting times for access decisions and plan approvals by State/Territory (Appendix R)



Harry

transforms with NDIS

Harry Deery had a bumpy start to life. The four-year-old Canberra local had a traumatic birth and experienced several challenges in his early development.

Harry's challenges were identified as global developmental delays, which affects his speech and language, gross and fine motor skills, cognition and his social skills.

Harry initially started therapies at around 18 months of age that his parents self-funded, but it wasn't until he joined the NDIS in 2016 that he was able to access more regular support.

Harry's funding is through the NDIS Early Childhood Early Intervention approach, which supports children under the age of six who have a developmental delay or disability.

For Fiona, it's had a life-changing impact for her family.

"That is something I love about the NDIS, the focus on early intervention.

"Harry's situation could have easily fallen through the cracks because it was quite difficult to get a diagnosis at a young age.

"We've been able to access the support that Harry needs to give him the best possible chance in the most critical years, and I'm now really hopeful for Harry's future."

1 Part One: Participants and their plans

Just over 310,000 participants are being supported by the NDIS, and almost 2,500 children are receiving initial supports in the Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) gateway.

1.1 Number of participants in the Scheme

At 30 September 2019, the NDIS was available in all areas of Australia⁶, with just over 310,000 participants receiving supports.

At 30 September 2019, 311,774 participants currently had approved plans. This represents a 9% increase from last quarter (an additional 26,688 participants).

Importantly, the Scheme is supporting both people from existing State/Territory and Commonwealth systems and people who have not previously received support. Of the 311,774 participants supported by the Scheme at 30 September 2019, 197,705 previously received support from existing State/Territory or Commonwealth programs and 114,069 are now receiving support for the first time. Hence, 37% of participants with approved plans are receiving support for the first time.

Figure 1: Active participants with approved plans and percentage increase over time

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20 YTD
Active participants	7,285	17,155	29,719	89,610	172,324	286,014 ⁷	311,774
Yearly increase		9,870	12,564	59,891	82,714	113,690	25,760 ⁸
% increase in active participants		35%	73%	202%	92%	66%	9%

⁶ With the exception of the Coco Islands and Christmas Island which will phase in from 1 July 2020.

⁷ In previous reports, all participants who had ever received an approved plan were counted. This report, and future reports, will state the number of participants with current plans. Since the Scheme started, 320,214 participants have received support of which 8,440 have exited the Scheme.

⁸ This increase is the net increase in the Scheme over the period. This quarter, 26,688 participants entered and 928 exited, resulting in a net increase of 25,760.

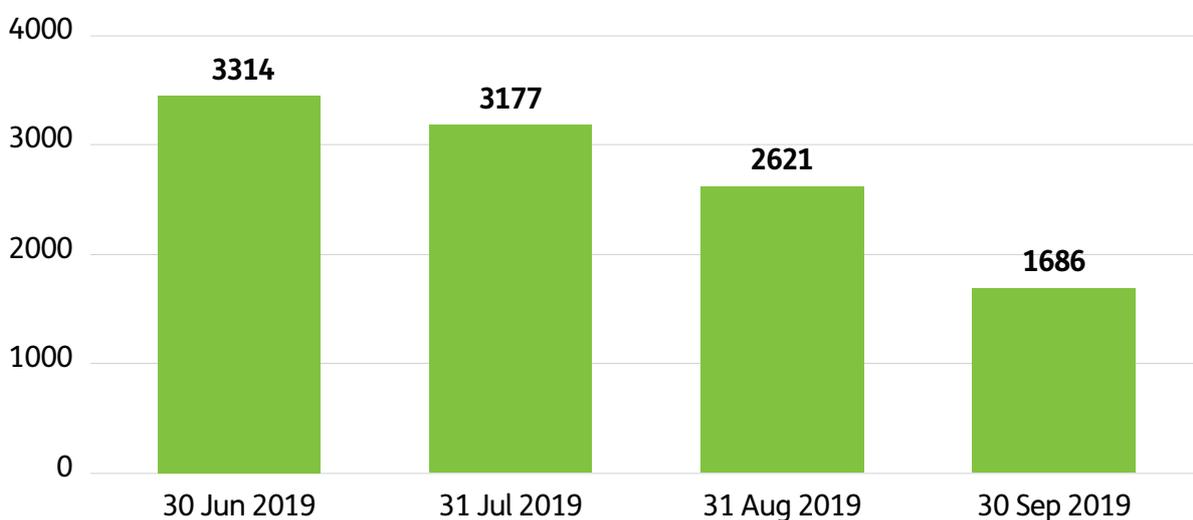
1.2 Children in the ECEI gateway

The number of children waiting more than 50 days halved over the quarter from 3,314 to 1,686.

Of the 26,688 additional participants with an approved plan this quarter, 9,883 were children aged 0-6 years (37%). This is reflective of the significant effort made by the NDIA to reduce the number of children who were waiting for supports. Specifically, the Minister and NDIA Board introduced strategies to resolve delays and backlogs, including working with ECEI partners to secure additional resources to provide support in a timelier manner, and the provision of standard interim plans for a period of six months, where that was required.

Overall, the number of children waiting more than 50 days for a plan has reduced from 3,314 to 1,686 over the quarter. During the same period the average wait times for children with a first plan in progress reduced from 104 to 54 days. While further work is required to reduce wait times for children, additional inroads have been made since the end of the quarter.⁹

Figure 2: Number of children ages 0-6 years waiting more than 50 days for a plan



The NDIA has also invested in more robust data collection to provide greater transparency over the number of children in the ECEI gateway, as well as to provide improved supports to children. At 30 September 2019, there were 44,907 children aged 0-6 years with an approved plan. A further:

6,009 children had met the access criteria and were waiting for an approved plan

5,038 had made an access request to the Agency (of which 689 (14%) had already commenced receiving initial supports)

8,878 children were in the ECEI gateway (of which 1,784 (20%) had already commenced receiving initial supports). Not all children will need to make an access request to the NDIA, with some receiving support in the gateway, and others supported by mainstream and community services.

⁹As at 19 October the number of children waiting more than 50 days had decreased further to 1493 and the average wait times for children with a first plan in progress had reduced to 48 days

1.3 Operational progress

The NDIA exceeded its operational target by 14%, with 87,599 plans completed in the quarter (both first plans and plan reviews).

The Agency achieved 114% of its operational target in the quarter, meaning 87,600 plans were completed compared with an operational target of 78,687 plans. The operational target comprises two components:

- First plans** – the Agency achieved **133%** of the first plan operational target of **19,279**¹⁰
- Plan reviews** – the Agency achieved **108%** of the plan review operational target of **59,408**

First plan operational targets are set at the beginning of each quarter by considering the number of actionable records on hand at the start of the quarter. Actionable records relate to those people who could be contacted and who met the access requirements. A large number of people met the access requirements and received an approved plan after the start of the quarter which contributed to the NDIA exceeding its operational target.

Plan review operational targets are also set at the start of the quarter and consider the number of participants who require plan reviews in the quarter. The Agency also exceeded this target, with more reviews undertaken than expected.

At 30 September 2019, the NDIA was 80,000 State/Territory and Commonwealth actionable records short of the bilateral estimate. Across all States/Territories, actionable records represent 74% of the bilateral estimate, with this percentage varying by State/Territory.¹¹

Compared with the bilateral estimate, the number of new people requesting access to the Scheme now exceeds the bilateral estimate of new participants by 42,000, recognising that people continue to approach to test their eligibility, with the Scheme expected to reach about 500,000 participants within the next five years.

Figure 3: Progress against bilateral estimates



¹⁰ Note: the number of first plans included in the comparison to the operational target (19,279) is less than the number of participants who received an approved plan this quarter (26,688). This is because some participants who received an approved plan this quarter were previously in the ECEI gateway and hence were not counted in the operational target for the quarter.
¹¹ 30 June 2019 Scheme to date bilateral estimates are compared with the actual number of participants who have benefitted from the Scheme in all State/Territories except for Western Australia, and the Northern Territory.

1.4 Participant characteristics

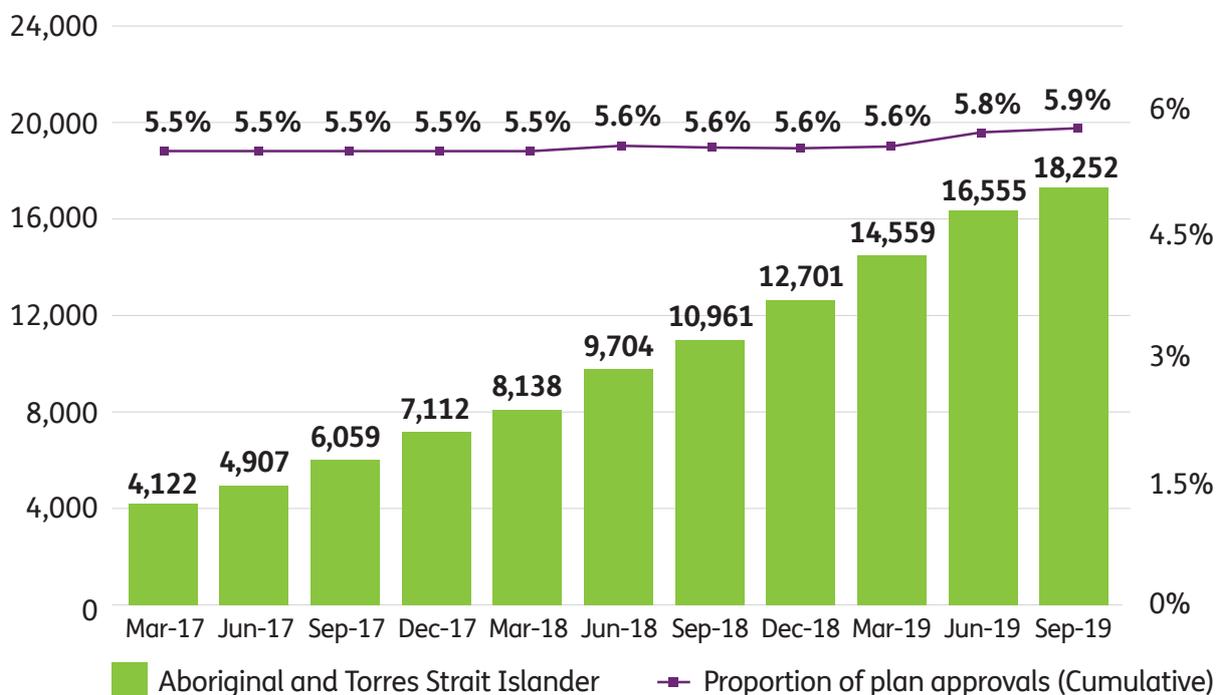
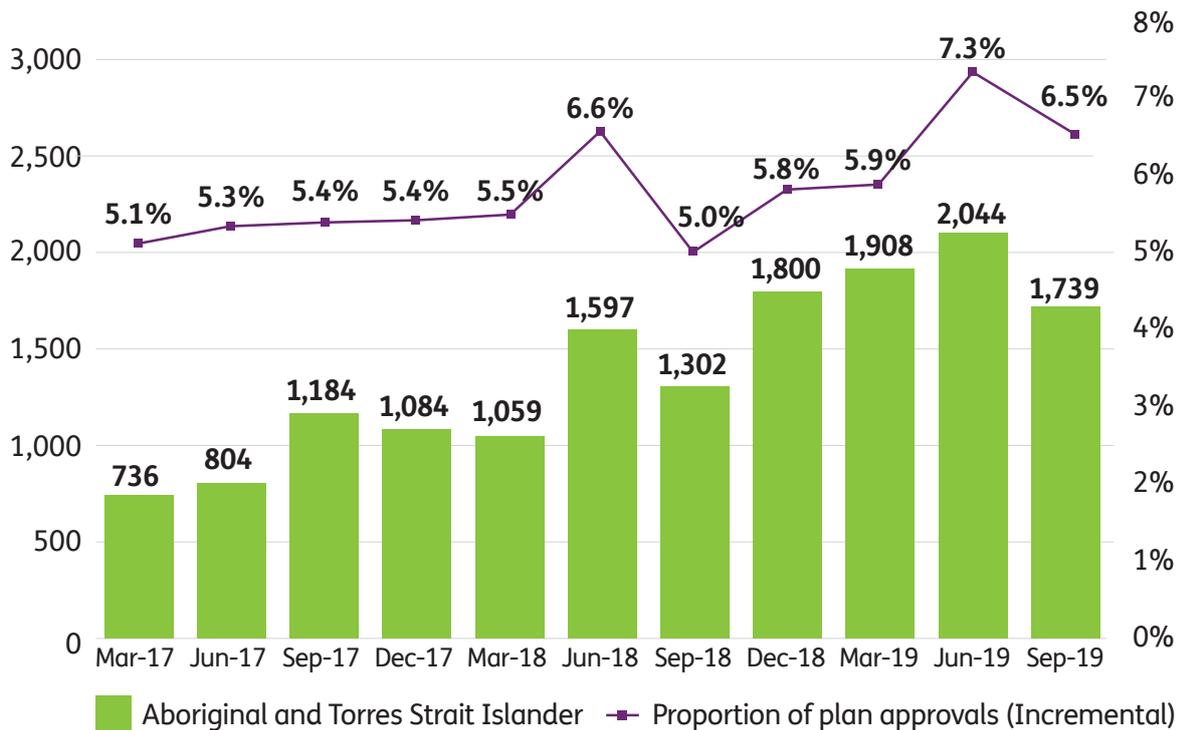
A higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse participants entered the Scheme during the quarter compared with previous quarters.

Of the 26,668 participants entering, there was increased diversity through higher numbers of:

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders: 6.5% of participants who received a plan in the quarter, compared with **5.8%** in previous quarters combined.

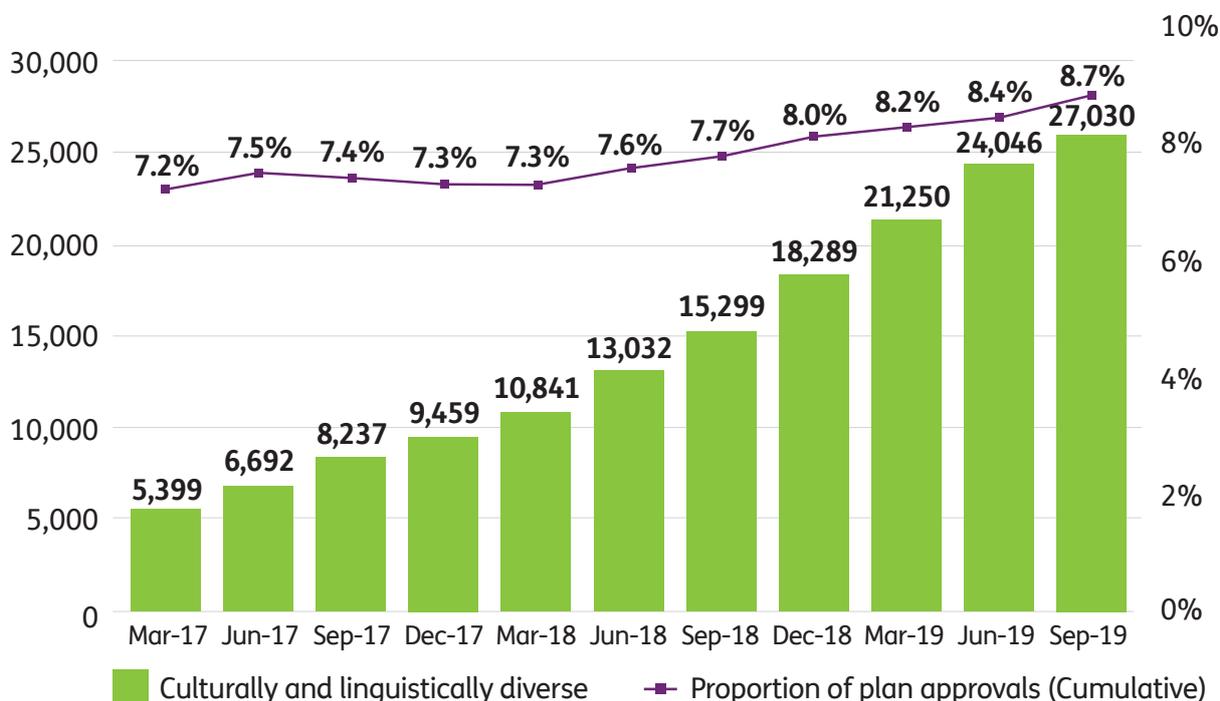
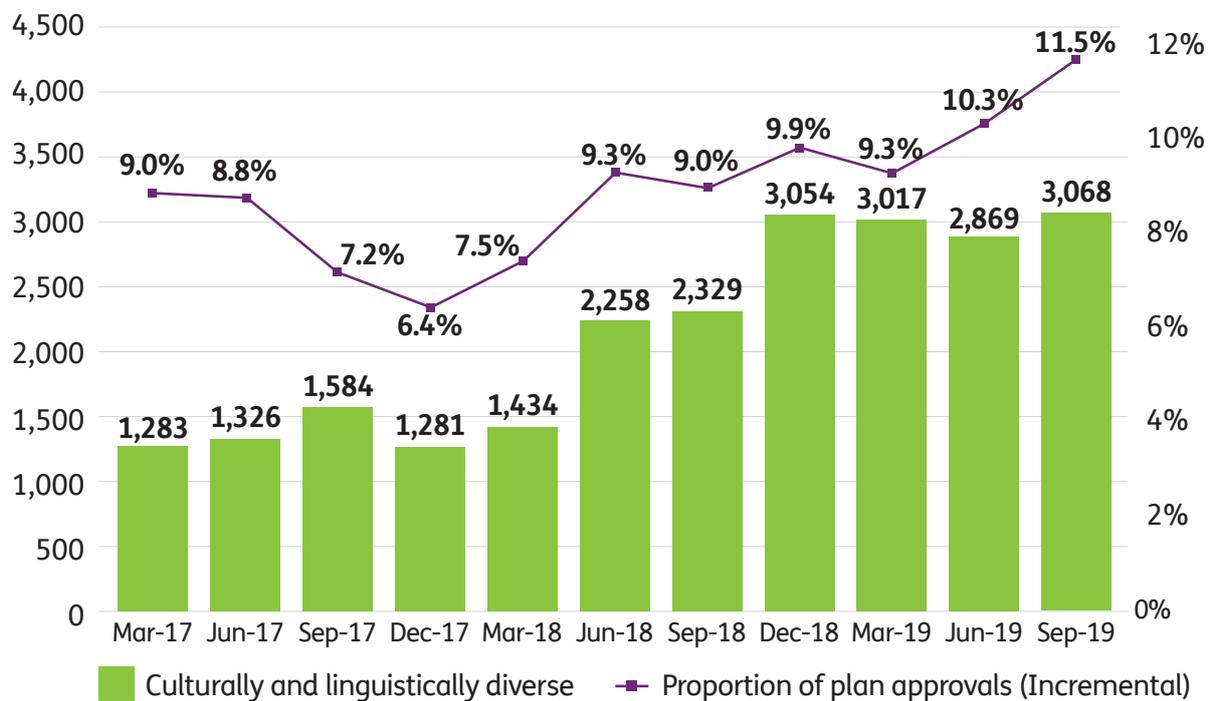
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD): 11.5% of participants who received a plan in the quarter, compared with **8.4%** in previous quarters combined.

Figure 4: Number and proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants over time incrementally (top) and cumulatively (bottom) – NATIONAL¹²



¹² 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. Data is not available prior to March 2017.

Figure 5: Number and proportion of culturally and linguistically diverse participants over time incrementally (top) and cumulatively (bottom) – NATIONAL¹³



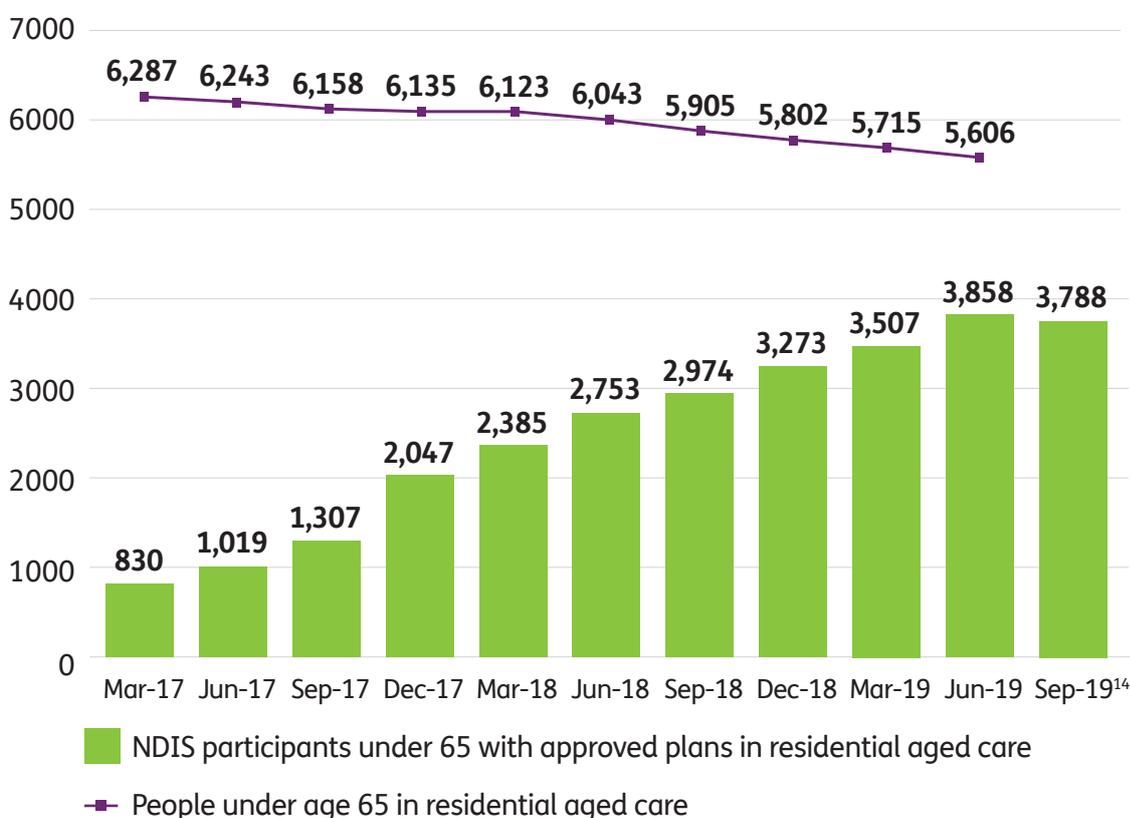
¹³ The incremental chart shows the distribution of new participants that have entered in each quarter. The cumulative chart shows the distribution of active participants as at each quarter over time. Data is not available prior to March 2017.

At 30 September 2019, there were 4,859 participants in **residential aged care** with approved plans. Of this 4,859 participants, 3,788 participants are under the age of 65 years (78%). Since March 2017 the number of participants in residential aged care has increased from 892 to 4,859 (and increase of 445%).

At 30 June 2019, there were 5,606 people under the age of 65 years living in residential aged care – hence, 68% of people under the age of 65 in residential aged care have NDIA approved plans.

The number of people in residential aged care under the age of 65 years has decreased in recent quarters from 6,287 at 31 March 2017 to 5,606 at 30 June 2019 (an 11% decrease). Hence, less people under the age of 65 years have entered residential aged care since the Scheme commenced transition on 1 July 2016. A gap remains, with this being addressed as a matter of priority.

Figure 6: Number of NDIS participants under the age of 65 in residential aged care compared with the number of people under the age of 65 in residential aged care.



¹⁴ During the September quarter a greater proportion of YPIRAC participants turned 65 or exited the Scheme therefore the overall number of YPIRAC participants under 65 declined over the quarter

On 12 September 2019, the NDIA appeared before the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety in Melbourne. As part of its inquiries, the Royal Commission has been exploring challenges facing younger people in residential aged care. The Agency has an important role to play in assisting younger people in residential aged care by making sure they have supports to help them live in other settings, if that is their goal.

In recent months the Agency has made it easier for participants to include Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) funding in their plans through the SDA Rule changes made earlier this year. A range of other improvements that have been made includes releasing more information to the SDA market, as well as price increases to provide further assurance to investors and others involved in building the SDA market.

The NDIA remains committed to continuing to delivering against activities in the Younger People in Residential Aged Care Action Plan.

Looking at the breakdown of participants by **age** and **disability** this quarter indicates:

High numbers of children aged 0-6 years entering the Scheme (**37%** this quarter compared with **12%** in previous quarters).

Consistent with the high numbers of children, relatively higher numbers of participants with autism (**34%** this quarter compared with **30%** in previous quarters), and developmental delay (**14%** this quarter compared with **5%** in previous quarters) entered the Scheme this quarter.

A higher proportion of participants with psychosocial disability also entered the Scheme this quarter (**10%** this quarter compared with **9%** in previous quarters).



Lily

dives into global goals

Despite representing her country in swimming at the October 2019 INAS Global Games for people with an intellectual disability, 20 year old Lily Crawford is making even bigger gains away from the pool.

Lily has secured employment for the first time, working five days a week at a Sydney CBD café, and it's something her mum Laurel thought may never be achieved.

After finishing school, Lily received NDIS funding for School Leavers Employment Supports (SLES) which allowed a local provider to support Lily during the transition from school to employment, during extended work experience in open employment, job site training and travel training.

"I don't think there is any way Lily could have got a job, especially not such a well-fitted job, without the NDIS SLES program, because she wasn't job-ready.

"She loves the job and it's a beautiful, supportive workplace, she's learning a lot and getting great feedback from the customers."

Lily continues to maintain her role alongside a busy training schedule, training five days a week at her local swimming club, with her NDIS funding also contributing to her swimming to allow her to increase her social and community participation.

"I love that Lily might now change other people's attitudes about what young people with Down syndrome can accomplish and what they can do with their lives."

2

Part Two: Participants experience and outcomes

Participant outcomes continue to improve.

2.1 Participation in work and community and social activities

Community and social participation continues to increase, with more participants included the longer they spend in the Scheme. Participation in work remains at similar levels.

Participation in community and work improves the wellbeing of people with disability, and lowers the long-term costs of care and support. The inclusion of people with disability in the community also benefits the wider community and promotes a more inclusive and diverse society.

The [NDIS 2019-2023 Corporate Plan](#) uses metrics and performance targets to measure achievements against the NDIA's aspirations. The 'quality experience and outcomes for participants' aspiration is measured by the percentage of participants currently in work and the number of participants involved in community and social activities, with initial results collected as participants enter the Scheme.

People who entered the Scheme between 1 July 2016 and 30 September 2016 have now been in the Scheme for three years – community and social participation has continued to increase over the three year period. There was a twelve percent increase in the number of participants aged 15 to 24 years old participating in community and social activities, from 32% at baseline to 44% after three years. For participants aged 25 years or over, the increase was 15 percentage points, from 36% to 51%. The average across both cohorts is a 15 percentage point increase from 35% to 50%.

Figure 7: Participation in community and social activities compared with the 2019–20 Target (participants who entered the Scheme between 1 July 2016 and 30 September 2016)¹⁵

Participants in community and social activities	Baseline	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	2019–20 Target
Aged 15 to 24 years	32%	37%	43%	44%	47%
Aged 25+	36%	38%	46%	51%	
Aged 15+ (average)	35%	38%	46%	50%	

¹⁵ The corporate target is only relevant for participants aged 25 years and over.

People who entered the Scheme between 1 October 2016 and 30 September 2017 have been in the Scheme for two years, and improvements in community and social participation are also evident. There has been an eleven percentage point increase from 35% to 46% over the two years for participants aged 15 and over.

Figure 8: Participation in community and social activities compared with the 2019–20 Target (participants who entered the Scheme between 1 October 2016 and 30 September 2017)¹⁶

Participants in community and social activities	Baseline	Year 1	Year 2	2019–20 Target
Aged 15 to 24 years	31%	38%	44%	47%
Aged 25+	36%	42%	47%	
Aged 15+ (average)	35%	41%	46%	

Overall, participation in work has remained at similar levels for both the group of participants who have been in the Scheme for three years, and the group of participants who have been in the Scheme for two years. While there have been increases in employment for participants ages 15–24 years of between five and seven percentage points, there have been decreases of two percentage points for participants aged 25+ years.

Figure 9: Participants in work compared with the 2019–20 Target (participants who entered the Scheme between 1 July 2016 and 30 September 2016)¹⁷

Participants in work	Baseline	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	2019–20 Target
Aged 15 to 24 years	13%	15%	17%	18%	24%
Aged 25+	21%	22%	19%	19%	
Aged 15+ (average)	20%	20%	19%	19%	

^{16,17} The corporate target is only relevant for participants aged 25 years and over.

Figure 10: Participants in work compared with the 2019–20 Target (participants who entered the Scheme between 1 October 2016 and 30 September 2017)¹⁸

Participants in work	Baseline	Year 1	Year 2	2019–20 Target
Aged 15 to 24 years	15%	19%	22%	24%
Aged 25+	27%	26%	25%	
Aged 15+ (average)	24%	24%	25%	

The NDIA Board and management recognise the need to improve employment outcomes for participants of the NDIS.

In November 2018 the Department of Social Services and the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) formed the NDIS Participant Employment Taskforce (the Taskforce) to recommend measures to improve employment outcomes for NDIS participants.

Since then the Taskforce has consulted with over 500 stakeholders (including participants, parents, carers and advocates, service providers, NDIA Planners and Local Area Coordinators, Commonwealth, state and territory government agencies, educators, employees, and peak bodies) who are active in the delivery of NDIS employment supports or invested in improving participant employment outcomes.

The insights from these consultations have informed the development of the **NDIS Participant Employment Strategy**, which will guide the activities of the NDIA over the next three years and help it achieve its Corporate Plan goal of 30% of participants in paid work by 2023. The Strategy will seek to activate the community and employers to enable improved economic participation of people with disability, and support the development of an innovative provider market to deliver individualised and tailored employment supports. It will also seek to improve NDIA policy and planning practice to ensure all working age participants have the opportunity to discuss their employment goals and be supported to map their employment pathway.

¹⁸ The corporate target is only relevant for participants aged 25 years and over.

2.2 Two and three year analysis of participant outcomes

More participants' report that the NDIS has helped the longer they have been in the Scheme.

To assess the longitudinal impact of the NDIS, participants who entered between 1 July 2016 and 30 September 2016 were asked 'Has the NDIS helped?' after one, two and three years in Scheme, allowing the NDIA to gain a better understanding of the longer-term impact.

The results support the trend that outcomes are improving as participants spend more time in the Scheme.

From transition to 30 September 2019, for participants that have been in the Scheme for three years, the following outcomes have been recorded:

For children aged 0 to before starting school:

- **100%** of parents and carers thought the NDIS improved their child's development, compared to **98%** in their second year and **92%** in their first year.
- **90%** of parents and carers thought the NDIS helped increase their child's ability to communicate what they want, compared to **89%** in their second year and **86%** in their first year.

For children starting school to 14 years:

- **68%** of parents and carers felt their child had become more independent as a result of the NDIS in their third year of participation, compared to **64%** in their second year and **55%** in their first year.
- **55%** of parents and carers felt the NDIS had improved their child's relationship with family and friends in their third year of participation, compared with **52%** in their second year and **48%** in their first year.

For young adults aged 15 to 24 years:

- **69%** of participants said the NDIS had helped them with daily living activities in their third year of participation, compared to **66%** in their second year and **62%** in their first year.
- **59%** of participants felt the NDIS had helped them improve their participation in community and social activities, compared to **57%** in their second year and **56%** in their first year.

For adults aged 25 and over:

- **79%** of participants believed the NDIS helped them have more choice and more control over their lives in the third year of participation in the NDIS, compared to **74%** in their second year and **69%** in their first year.
- **85%** of participants said the NDIS had helped them with daily living activities in their third year of participation, compared to **79%** in their second year and **75%** in their first year.

From transition to 30 September 2019, participants that have been in the Scheme for two years¹⁹ also reported positive outcomes:

For children aged 0 to before starting school:

- **94%** of parents and carers thought the NDIS improved their child's development, compared to **91%** in their first year.
- **84%** of parents and carers thought the NDIS helped increase their child's ability to communicate what they want, compared to **82%** in their first year.

For children starting school to 14 years:

- **64%** of parents and carers felt their child had become more independent as a result of the NDIS in their second year of participation, compared to **55%** in their first year.
- **49%** of parents and carers felt the NDIS had improved their child's relationship with family and friends in their second year of participation, compared with **43%** in their first year.

For young adults aged 15 to 24 years:

- **64%** of participants said the NDIS had helped them with daily living activities in their second year of participation, compared to **57%** in their first year.
- **57%** of participants felt the NDIS had helped them improve their participation in community and social activities, compared to **53%** in their first year.

For adults aged 25 and over:

- **74%** of participants believed the NDIS helped them have more choice and more control over their lives in their second year of participation in the NDIS, compared to **66%** in their first year.
- **79%** of participants said the NDIS had helped them with daily living activities in their second year of participation, compared to **69%** in their first year.

Whilst the above results are encouraging, the analysis also indicates that there are areas where outcomes could be improved. For example, after three years in the Scheme, only 13% of participants aged 15 to 24 agreed that being in the NDIS had helped them find a suitable job, compared to 14% after two years and 14% after one year. Similarly, for participants aged 25 and over, after three years in the Scheme, over 20% agreed that being in the NDIS had helped them find a suitable job, compared to 22% after two years and 21% after one year. As noted above, the NDIA is committed to improving employment outcomes for participants and has developed the NDIS Employment Strategy for this purpose.

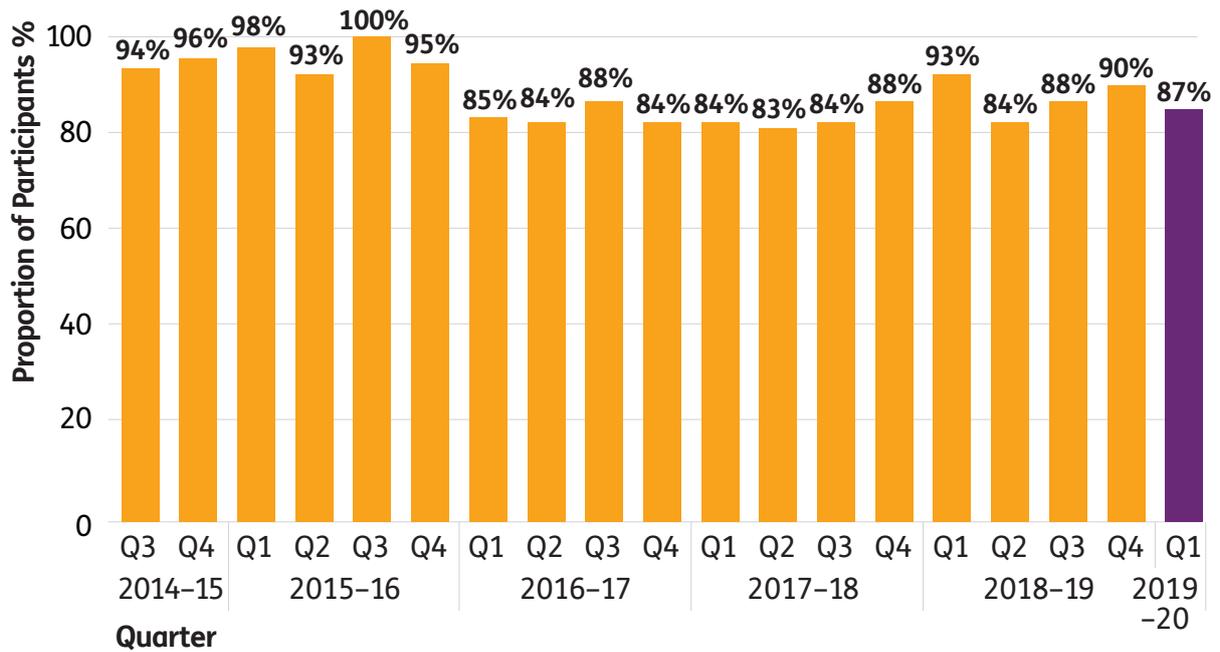
¹⁹That is, participants who entered the Scheme between 1 October 2016 and 30 September 2017 and have been in the Scheme two years.

2.3 Participant satisfaction

Participant satisfaction remains high with 87% of participants rating their planning experience as good or very good.

Plan development is a key milestone on the participant pathway. To better understand the impact of the NDIS on participants and their families and carers, the Agency conducts satisfaction surveys during the planning process each quarter. This quarter, 87% of participants rated their overall experience with the NDIS planning process as either ‘Very good’ or ‘Good’.

Figure 11: Participant satisfaction rates over time



Of the participants surveyed this quarter, 93% felt their planner listened to them, 93% considered that they had enough time to tell their story, and 91% reported that their planning meeting went well. A lower proportion of participants (80%) felt that planners helped them think about their future.

Figure 12: Participant satisfaction in 2019–20 Q1

	Agree/ Strongly agree	Neutral	Disagree/ Strongly disagree
The planner listened to me	93%	3%	3%
I had enough time to tell my story and say what support I need	93%	3%	4%
The planner knows what I can do well	83%	10%	7%
The planner had some good ideas for my plan	84%	8%	8%
I know what is in my plan	87%	7%	5%
The planner helped me think about my future	80%	11%	9%
I think my plan will make my life better	86%	8%	6%
The planning meeting went well	91%	3%	5%

2.3.1 Additional participant satisfaction results

Additional survey information indicates significant improvements across the pathway.

Since September 2018, the Agency has been testing and refining how participant satisfaction surveys are conducted to allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the participant experience at each stage of the pathway. It gathers responses at the four primary stages of the participant pathway – access, pre-planning, planning and plan review – whereas the original survey gathers responses at the planning stage only.

The survey analyses the experience of different participant groups - for example, differences in age and disability. By gaining greater insight into varying experiences at different stages of the NDIS process, the NDIA will be better positioned to make meaningful and specific improvements to the participant pathway.

The online version of the survey was launched in June 2019, to complement the existing phone surveys. The online version asks the same questions as the phone survey. Participants receive an SMS or email message asking them to log into the myplace participant portal to complete the survey. Responses are private, and any identifying data is removed.

A comparison of the previous quarters (2018-19 Q2, Q3 and Q4) with the current quarter (2019-20 Q1) indicates improvement in satisfaction, particularly in understanding the next stages in the process:

Stage One: Access

- **96%** of respondents believed their NDIS contact to be respectful this quarter compared with **95%** across the prior three quarters.
- **82%** of respondents were happy with the process by which they entered the NDIS this quarter compared with **77%** across the prior three quarters.
- **76%** of respondents understood the next stage in their NDIS process this quarter compared with **71%** across the prior three quarters.

Stage Two: Pre-planning

- **95%** of respondents understood what information they had to provide to prepare for pre-planning this quarter compared with **96%** across the prior three quarters.
- **85%** of respondents believed their NDIS contact understood how disability impacts their life compared with **88%** across the prior three quarters.
- **82%** of respondents understood the next stage in their NDIS process this quarter compared with **76%** across the prior three quarters.

Stage Three: Planning

- **97%** of respondents understood what information they had to provide for their plan this quarter compared with **96%** across the prior three quarters.
- **88%** of respondents believed their NDIS contact understood how disability impacts their life compared with **87%** across the prior three quarters.
- **81%** of respondents understood the next stage in their NDIS process this quarter compared with **75%** across the prior three quarters.

Stage Four: Plan Review

- **87%** of respondents felt prepared for their plan review meeting this quarter compared with **83%** across the prior three quarters.
- **87%** of respondents believed their NDIS contact understood how disability impacts their life this quarter compared with **82%** across the prior three quarters.
- **85%** of respondents believed their NDIS plan was helping them progress with their goals which was consistent with the prior three quarters.

2.4 Waiting times for access decisions and plans

The NDIA has significantly reduced the time to make an access decision and approve a first plan in the quarter, meaning more people are accessing support faster.

Access decisions

The NDIA recognises that the time taken to assess requests to access the Scheme earlier this year were too long. It became known in May 2019 that the ICT system that is used to allocate work to staff to assess access requests was not working as expected. Once the ICT issue became known, the NDIA re-deployed extra staff to make access decisions and there has been a commensurate reduction in timeframes since then. The ICT system issue has also been rectified.

As at 30 September 2019, outstanding access decisions had been in progress for an average of 12 days. This compares with 38 days at 30 June 2019. Further, access decisions completed in the September month were completed in 12 days on average compared with 42 days in June 2019.

Figure 13: Number of days (average) taken to make an access decision

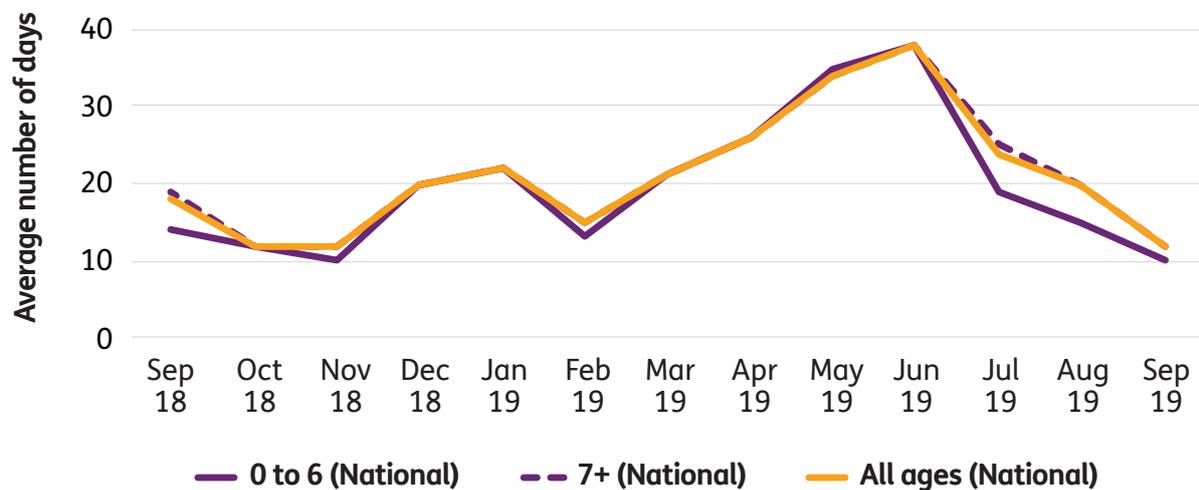
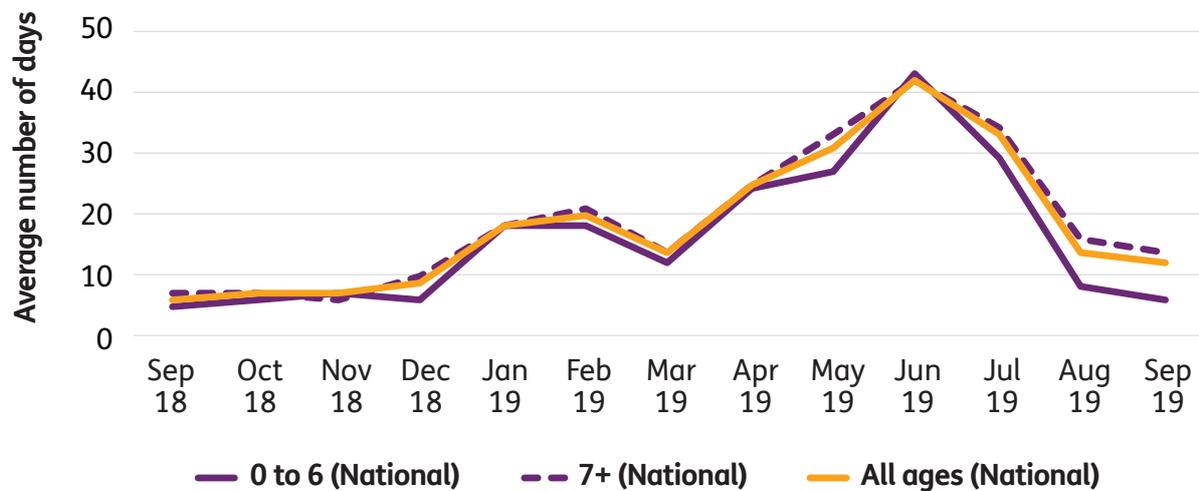


Figure 14: Access decisions completed (average days)



First plan approvals

Similar to access decisions, first plans are being approved more quickly after an access decision has been made. First plans completed in the September month were completed in 88 days on average compared with 133 days in June 2019. Further, outstanding first plans have been in progress for an average of 79 days at 30 September 2019 compared with 155 days at 30 June 2019.

Figure 15: First plans in progress

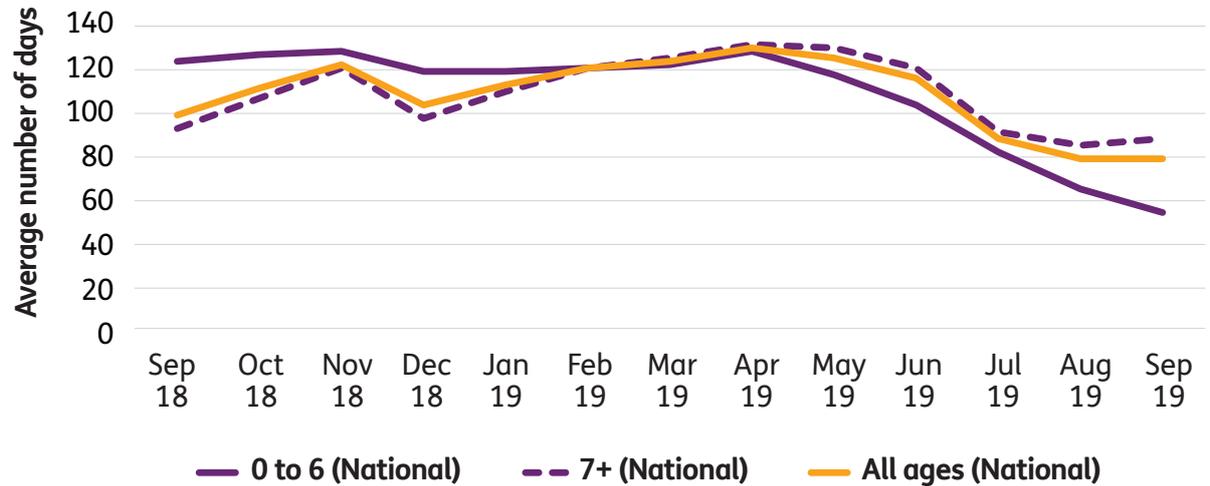
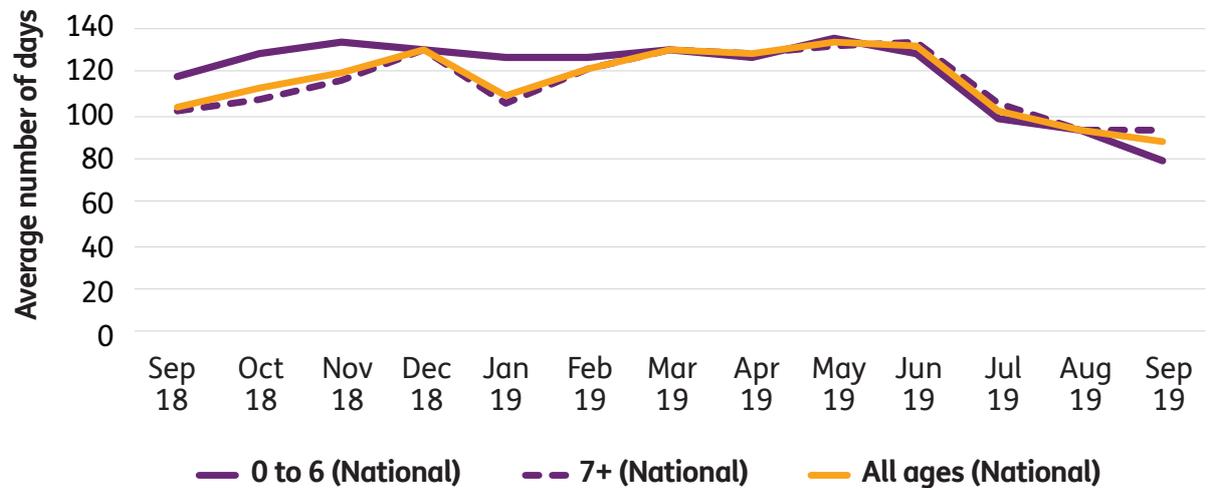


Figure 16: First plans completed

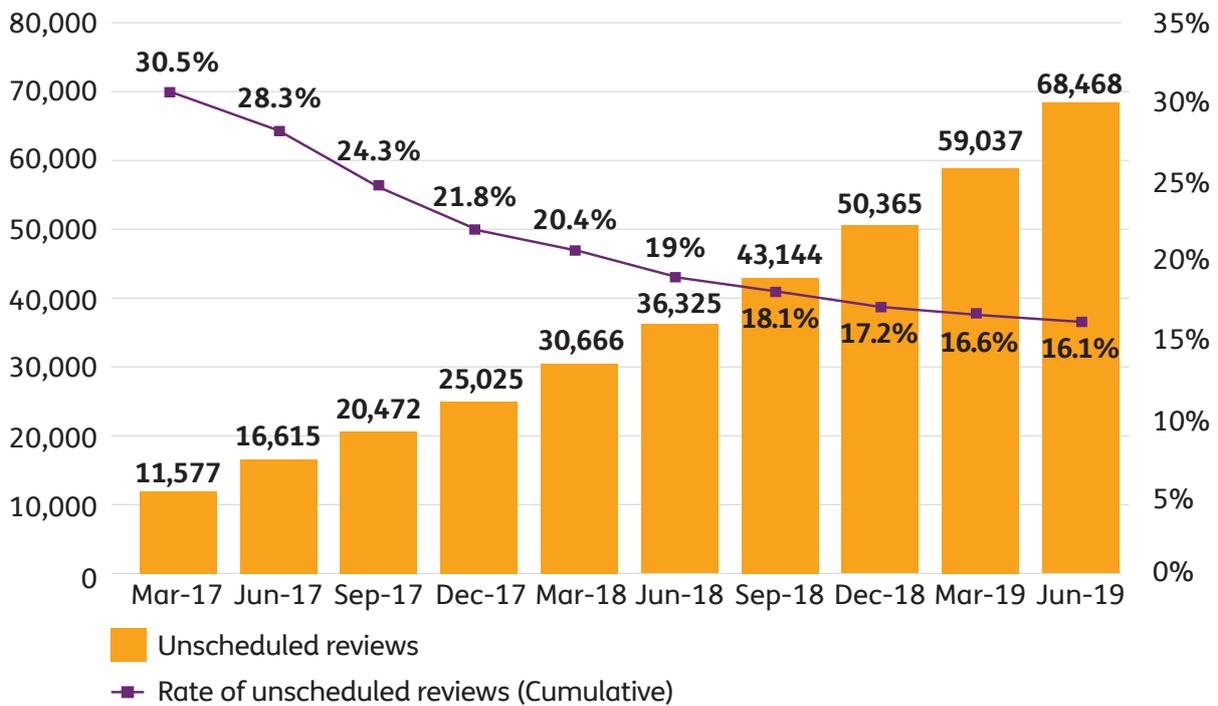


2.5 Plan reviews and complaints

Unscheduled reviews continue to decrease over time, with a reduction from 24.3% at 30 September 2017 to 16.1% at 30 September 2019.

Unscheduled reviews are plans that were reviewed more than 100 days before the scheduled plan review date.

Figure 17: Cumulative number and proportion of unscheduled plan reviews over time



Participant and provider complaints have also been tracking downwards, with participant complaints at 5.4% of access requests in the quarter compared with 7.0% a year ago, and provider complaints at 3.8% of registered providers in the quarter compared with 5.4% a year ago.

Both participant complaints (as a proportion of access requests) and provider complaints (as a proportion of registered providers) are at their lowest levels for more than two years.

Figure 18: Participant complaints received as a proportion of access requests (cumulative)²⁰

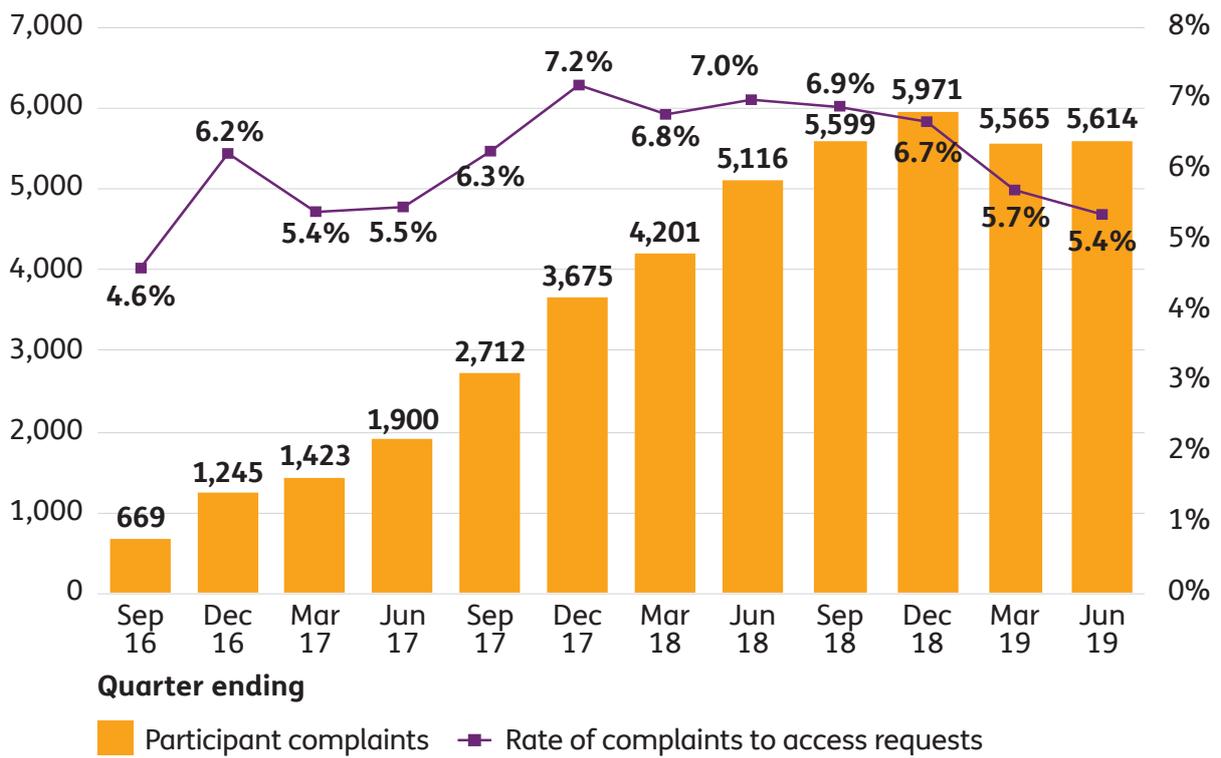
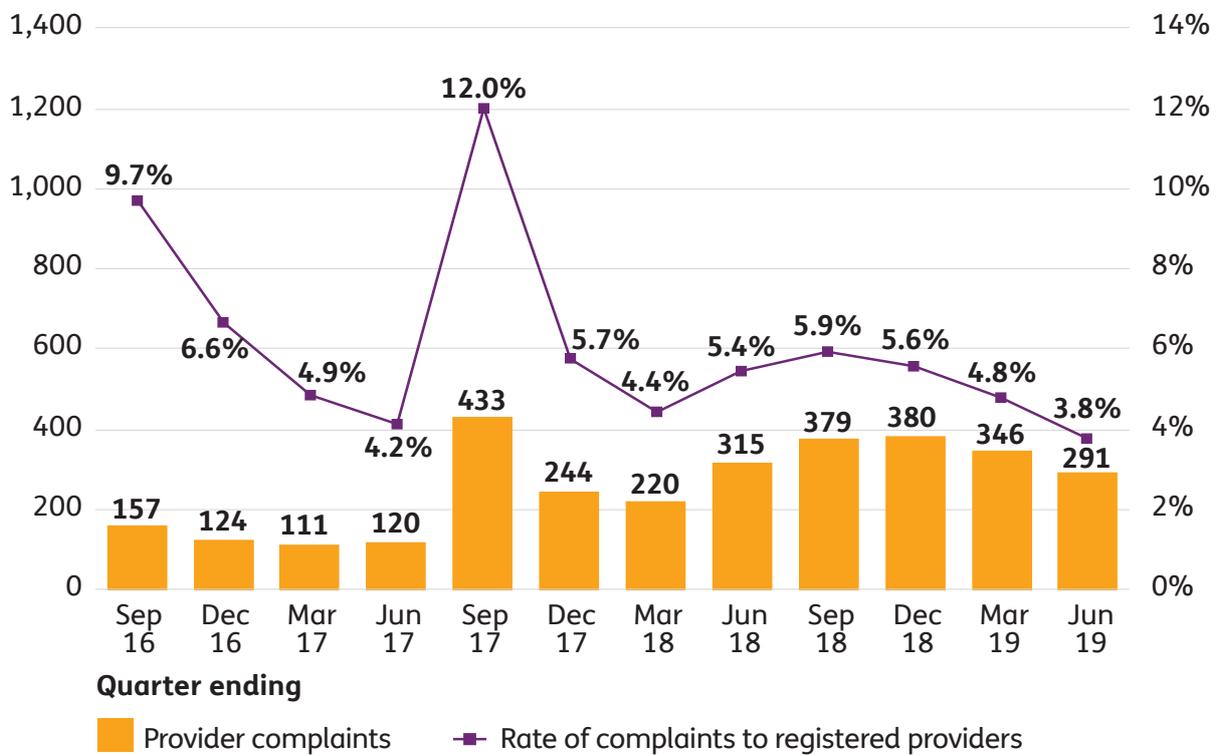


Figure 19: Provider complaints received as a proportion of registered providers²⁰



²⁰ Complaints are reported to 30 June 2019 due to the lag in reporting and hence the September 2019 quarter will be reported in the next quarterly report.

2.6 Actions to improve the participant experience

The NDIA Board and management is committed to a continuous improvement agenda, to reduce waiting times and provide a more tailored participant experience.

Participant survey guarantee

In mid-August, Minister Robert announced a review of the NDIS legislation and rules, with a focus on improving wait times and processes for participants. The review, being led by David Tune AO, is due to be completed by December 2019 and will inform the development of the NDIS Participant Service Guarantee, due to be in place from July 2020.

The NDIS Participant Service Guarantee will set out what participants can expect in terms of timeframes for accessing the Scheme and receiving their plans, with a particular focus on children and participants who require Specialist Disability Accommodation and Assistive Technology. The NDIA is committed to working with Mr Tune to ensure the best outcomes for participants.

Further, as seen in section 2.4, waiting times have reduced in recent months due to the commitment from the NDIA Board and management to improving the participant experience.

Improvements to assistive technology

The NDIA is committed to ensuring participants get timely access to the Assistive Technology (AT) supports they need.

In the last year the NDIA has introduced a number of improvements, including:

- Low cost AT (under \$1,500) can be purchased without quotes or further approvals, once approved as reasonable and necessary in an NDIS participant's plan. The threshold increased again to \$5,000 on 1 October 2019.
- NDIA planning staff have clearer guidance to ensure sufficient funding is included in plans for the repair and maintenance of AT, and the requirements for replacing worn out or outgrown AT have been simplified
- Improved assessment templates have been released to support better information sharing between professionals who provide advice on suitable AT and the NDIA.

Over the next 12 months the NDIA will focus on:

- Further streamlining processes and procedures to speed up the NDIS participant plan approvals for AT
- Introducing more targeted communication methods to reach out to participants who have AT supports already approved in their plan but have not actioned or used them to date
- Exploring ways to build a flexible AT supply market through AT equipment lease and long-term loan services
- Making it easier for participants to arrange urgent repairs for their existing AT
- Requiring only one quote for most AT under the value of \$15,000 and no more than two quotes for AT over the value of \$15,000.

Portal changes for automatic plan extensions

In response to feedback, the Agency has addressed an issue experienced by participants and providers when there was a gap between the lapse of a plan and a new plan being approved. Sometimes, it was not possible to approve a new plan on the exact date it was due to finish. In some circumstances, the gap meant participants were unable to pay for supports until a new plan was in place. In early August, the Agency began automatic extensions of plans due to lapse within the next seven days. Extending the plan for 28 days ensures participants can continue to access supports and services during the plan review process. The extension also means providers can continue to claim for the supports they have provided until the new plan is approved.

Continuation of the independent assessment pilot

The Independent Assessment Pilot was well received by participants and their families/carers. It experienced a 70 per cent voluntary opt-in rate and successfully reached its target. Over 500 functional assessments conducted by an independent assessor were completed as part of the pilot.

The evaluation of the pilot determined that the use of consistent functional assessments resulted in improved decision-making and more equitable plan outcomes for participants with similar characteristics.

Planners and Local Area Coordinators (LACs) reported that information contained in the assessments informed their conversations with participants, which in turn increased their levels of confidence in developing plans. They found that the assessments gave helpful insights and more detailed information about the participant's disability and functioning in different life areas.

The NDIA plans to continue testing independent functional assessments from November 2019, using the insights and feedback received in the original pilot to make improvements. The continuing pilot will be limited to a single service delivery area in NSW and will be offered to participants who are approaching a scheduled plan review. It will now test the use of independent assessments across the full range of disability types, ages, cultural backgrounds and circumstances.

As with the original pilot, assessments will be offered free of charge and will help inform the supports included in a participant's plan. Pilot participants will complete all of the steps other participants are required to take when undergoing a scheduled plan review, except they will complete the additional voluntary assessment.

There will be opportunities throughout the pilot process for open discussion and feedback, giving those who participate in the pilot the chance to shape any future improvements to the NDIS planning process.

The NDIS participant pathway

The NDIA continues to make improvements to the participant pathway based on consultation with participants, families, carers, providers and sector representatives. Changes relate to:

- Tailoring approaches around the needs of the NDIS participant, including complex support needs and Early Childhood Early Intervention pathways.
- Service streams for psychosocial disability and hearing, to deliver targeted support to provide participants with an experience more suited to their specific disability needs.
- Four areas of service enhancements to meet the communication and engagement needs of people from different backgrounds or areas, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, culturally and linguistically diverse people, remote and very remote communities, and people who identify as LGBTIQ+.

Complex Support Needs Pathway

The Complex Support Needs Pathway continues to provide specialised support for people who require additional support to access and engage with the NDIS and who have a greater need for coordination of multiple services. This may include voluntary or involuntary involvement in other government service systems (such as justice systems, child protection, and/or mental health programs) and transitional supports for returning to the community (for example, exiting incarceration or an acute rehabilitation environment).

The roll out of the Complex Support Needs Pathway began in November 2018, commencing operations in a limited number of Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Victoria and NSW, utilising existing NDIA resourcing.

The Complex Support Needs Pathway progressive expansion across all states and territories, which began in March, is ongoing. As at 4 October 2019, 148 Complex Support Needs Pathway planners are now present in every State and Territory. However, there is not yet full geographical coverage in rural and remote areas. Further recruitment of Complex Support Needs pathway planners is underway across the country. It is anticipated an additional 50 planners will become available from October 2019. Early insights and observations indicate that the Complex Support Needs Pathway is having a positive impact for participants. Existing participants assessed as having complex support needs will transition to the Complex Support Needs Branch over the remainder of 2019.

Early Childhood Early Intervention Pathway

The NDIA continues working to address the longer wait times many families and children are currently experiencing. One of the key initiatives is to provide a standardised, interim six-month plan for identified participants who have been waiting for 50 days or longer. This began to be implemented in South Australia from 12 August 2019, with rollout to other parts of the country commencing on 19 August 2019.

From early April 2019, the new ECEI information booklet for families has been available to Early Childhood Partners (EC Partners). The booklet provides greater guidance on what families and carers can expect from the ECEI approach and EC Partners. In addition to the ECEI booklet, further ECEI resources were delivered in September 2019.

These new resources include:

- an information pamphlet about how parents/carers can access an EC Partner for support for their child.
- developmental delay information published on the NDIS website to support families and referrers such as Maternal Health Nurses, early childhood educators, General Practitioners, paediatricians, and allied health professionals further understand the eligibility criteria.

These additional resources aim to direct parents/carers who have concerns about their children's development to an EC Partner, as well as to build strong referral pathways by defining who is eligible for the NDIS.

Wait times have proved the greatest challenge for ECEI Partners due to the large number of children approaching the NDIS, and the personalised and considered approach necessary to manage each ECEI access application effectively.

Hearing service stream

The NDIA continues work on developing further hearing streams for participants aged seven to 64, including consulting with key external stakeholders in the deaf community to provide input across key life transition points. In addition, work is ongoing to transition eligible clients within the Commonwealth's Hearing Services Program to the NDIS. This commenced in partnership with Department of Health and Hearing Australia at the beginning of March 2019. All eligible clients will transition by the end of June 2020.

Service enhancements

The NDIA has developed an online learning module for NDIA staff and partners to build Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness. During NAIDOC week (7-14 July) 2019, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Awareness eLearning module was released. This online training is mandatory learning for all NDIA staff and partners.

The NDIA, building on this work, and to further improve the cultural competency of staff and provide a nationally consistent approach, has designed face-to-face training for staff and partners who consult with or deliver services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants, their families and carers. This training will undergo a progressive rollout to targeted service delivery and partner locations.

Community Connectors

A range of Community Connector initiatives are currently taking place in the Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia. These initiatives target remote and very remote areas and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities within them. The Remote Community Connector Program is a cultural brokerage initiative which aims to engage, inform and assist participants from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds and rural and remote communities through the NDIS pathway process.

In May 2019, the Morrison government committed \$20 million to expand current NDIS Community Connectors program to include urban and rural Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as well as other diverse and hard to reach population groups. On 15 October 2019, Minister Stuart Robert committed to a National Community Connector Program (NCCP) proposal that will deliver on this commitment. The NCCP includes establishing links with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities and ageing parents and carers of children with disability, to support these groups to navigate the NDIS and get the services they or their children need.

Joint Planning

Since 6 May 2019, the NDIA has been conducting a soft launch of joint planning meetings in Southern Adelaide. The launch began at the NDIA St Marys and partner Mission Australia's Clovelly Park sites; and was later expanded to the Noarlunga site.

In joint planning meetings the participant, Local Area Coordinator (LAC), and NDIA planner collectively discuss the participant's plan and included supports before the plan is approved. The joint planning meeting offers the opportunity to approve the plan at the meeting, provide a copy of the plan, and support a faster implementation of plans by participants.

This work builds on the joint planning testing, which took place during the 2018 Pilot 1 (new plans) and Pilot 2 (plan reviews) as part of service improvements for the new NDIS Participant Pathway. The joint planning meeting soft launch also builds on the rollout of service improvements to the new NDIS Participant Pathway, particularly the delivery of plan alignment and plan implementation meetings, and stronger connections between LACs and planners.

Between 1 July 2019 and 30 September 2019, 171 joint planning meetings were held, with 159 (92 per cent) of plans approved during the meeting. The soft launch in Southern Adelaide to date has shown:

- that joint planning establishes a strong foundation with participants, emphasises respect for participant's and provides transparency in developing the participant's plan
- the importance of a strong and equal partnership between the LAC and the planner
- that joint planning meetings provide efficiencies at plan implementation that participants who have a joint planning meeting utilise the plan funds more quickly following plan approval.

Feedback from the soft launch will inform national rollout of joint planning meetings, which we are working to start in the near future.

Figure 20: Roll out of revised Pathways is underway (at 30 September 2019)

Initiative	VIC	NSW	SA	ACT	WA	QLD	NT	TAS
1. Pathways								
New NDIS participant pathway								
Roll out of enhanced baseline service improvement training for staff and partners	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Joint planning soft-launch			⚙️					
Full roll-out of joint planning	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Complex support needs pathway								
Specialised APS staff progressively added	⚙️	⚙️	⚙️	⚙️	⚙️	⚙️	⚙️	⚙️
Enhanced Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) pathway								
Refinements made (ECEI booklet, ECEI prioritisation framework; ECEI practice leads)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Additional resources under consideration – factsheets and pamphlet	⚙️	⚙️	⚙️	⚙️	⚙️	⚙️	⚙️	⚙️
2. Service Stream Improvements								
Psychosocial disability service stream								
Worked with Mental Health Australia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Focused on pre-access, streamlining access	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rolling out enhanced training for staff and partners	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hearing service stream								
New streamlined access for children aged 0-6 with hearing loss	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Worked with major hearing providers to redesign pathways for 7+	⚙️	⚙️	⚙️	⚙️	⚙️	⚙️	⚙️	⚙️
 Complete								
 Underway								
 Roll-out not commenced								

Initiative	VIC	NSW	SA	ACT	WA	QLD	NT	TAS
3. Service enhancements								
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander								
Extended community connectors								
Rolling out enhanced staff and partner training (Tier 1 complete)								
Testing of enhanced face-to-face staff and partner training (Tier 2) ²¹								
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse								
Developed resources so participants can connect to interpreting services								
Rolling out enhanced staff and partner training (Tier 1 and Tier 2)								
LGBTIQ+								
Rolling out enhanced staff and partner training (Tier 1 complete)								
Rolling out enhanced staff and partner training (Tier 2 to be determined)								
Remote and Very Remote								
Extended community connectors ²²								

Complete

Underway

Roll-out not commenced

²¹ Testing only occurred in three States and Territories.

²² The Community Connectors initiative is a cultural brokerage program which is targeted at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and rural and remote communities. It is currently being rolled out in three States and Territories, with planning underway for the other jurisdictions.



Nathan is fighting fit with NDIS

At age 35, Nathan Maher was living a relatively healthy life.

But in 2014, Nathan was diagnosed with a life-threatening form of meningitis and within hours of arriving at hospital, his family were informed Nathan wasn't expected to make it through the night.

After five years of health complications which led to both his legs being amputated below the knee, Nathan is now fighting fit and in his own words "back on track".

"When I first heard about the NDIS I was still in hospital recovering from surgery, and saw it as a real opportunity for assistance, to try and regain control over my life."

Nathan received funding for modifications in the home like ramps and handrails as well as funding for new prosthetic legs and a wheelchair.

He also receives funding support workers who assist in the home with cleaning and other tasks as required.

"Fourteen months on, and I am once again in control of my life, with the freedom and independence that 18 months ago, I thought unobtainable."

"I have been written off countless times, from the day I was placed in a coma and my family being told I would not live the night, to being told I would never stand again, let alone walk.

"Now I can stand as living proof that through hard work and determination, a quality that all people with disabilities share, we can achieve our dreams.

"Without the support of the NDIS, none of this would be possible."

3

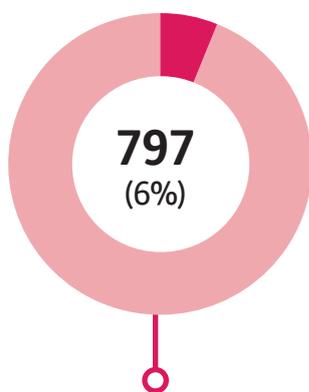
Part Three: Providers and the growing market

The number of providers supporting participants continues to grow, and transparency in pricing and increased market information are assisting the market to further grow.

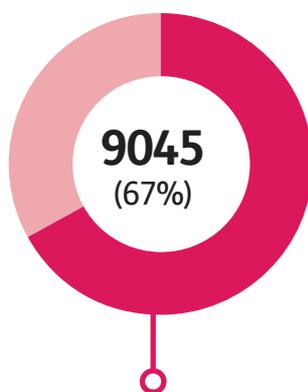
3.1 Active providers

The number of active providers increased by 797 in the September quarter, an increase of 6%.

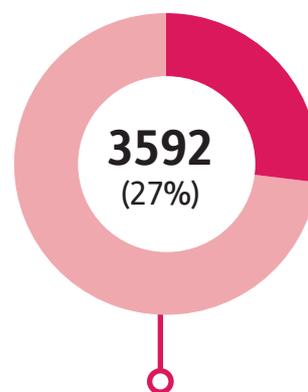
Since the start of the Scheme, 13,434 providers have supported participants. Of these:



were active for the first time this quarter



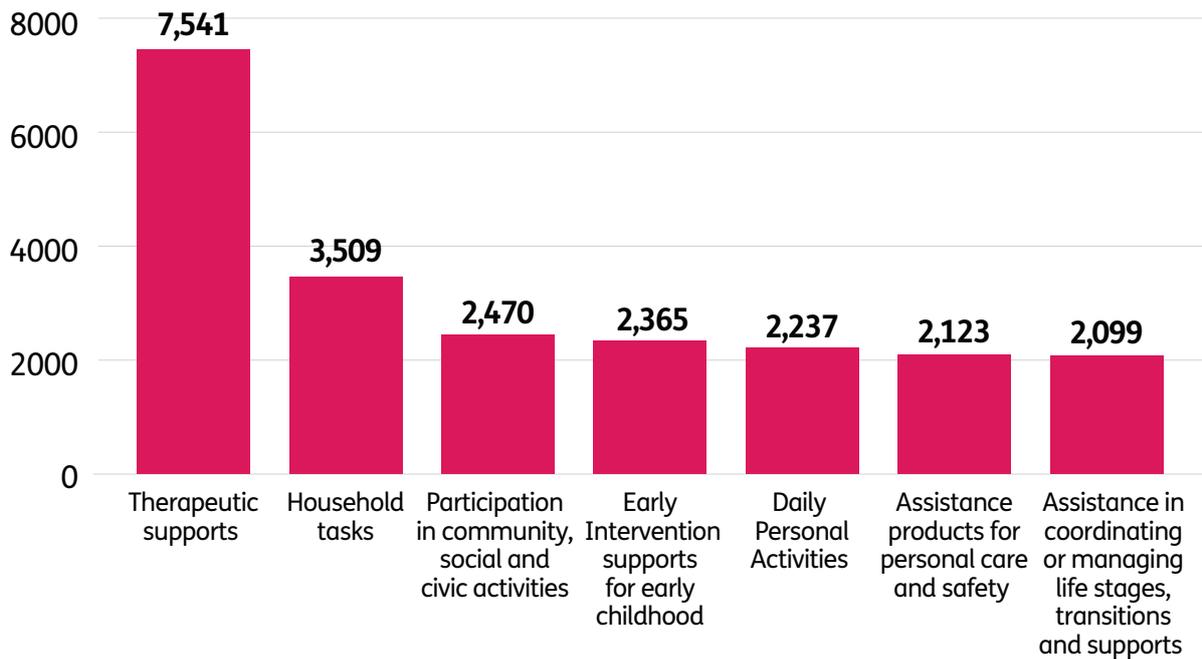
were active this quarter and also in previous quarters



were inactive this quarter

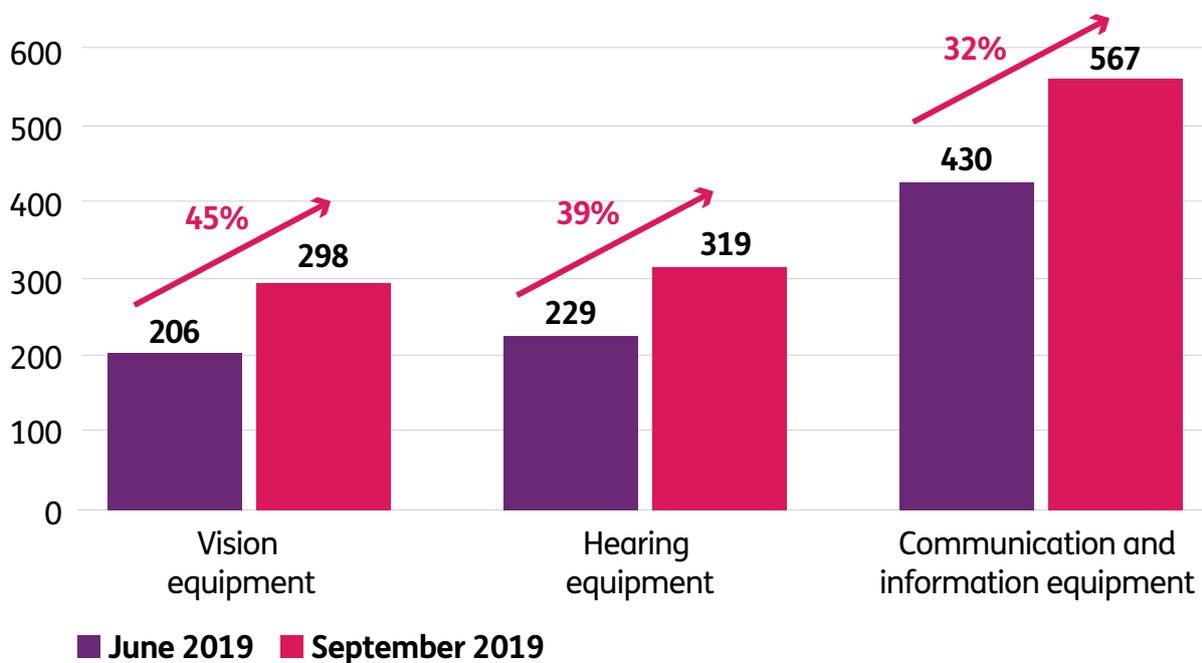
The registration groups with the largest number of active providers are therapeutic supports, household tasks, participation in community, social and civic activities, early intervention supports for early childhood, and daily personal activities. These correspond with the largest groups of support provided in the Scheme.

Figure 21: The largest registration groups for active providers



There was growth in the number of active providers across all services groups in the quarter, and largest for assistive technology.

Figure 22: Registration groups with the largest percentage increase in active providers in the quarter



3.2 Choice and control, utilisation and market concentration

The NDIA released comprehensive market data on regions in Australia in order to promote transparency and encourage better participant outcomes.

Payments across the Scheme during FY18-19 totalled approximately \$10.0 billion, the majority of which related to payments that were made directly to providers on behalf of participants. In the September 2019 quarter, a further \$3.0 billion was paid. Three key indicators outlined in the NDIA Corporate Plan in aspiring to a competitive market with innovate supports are:

- Choice and control
- Utilisation
- Market concentration

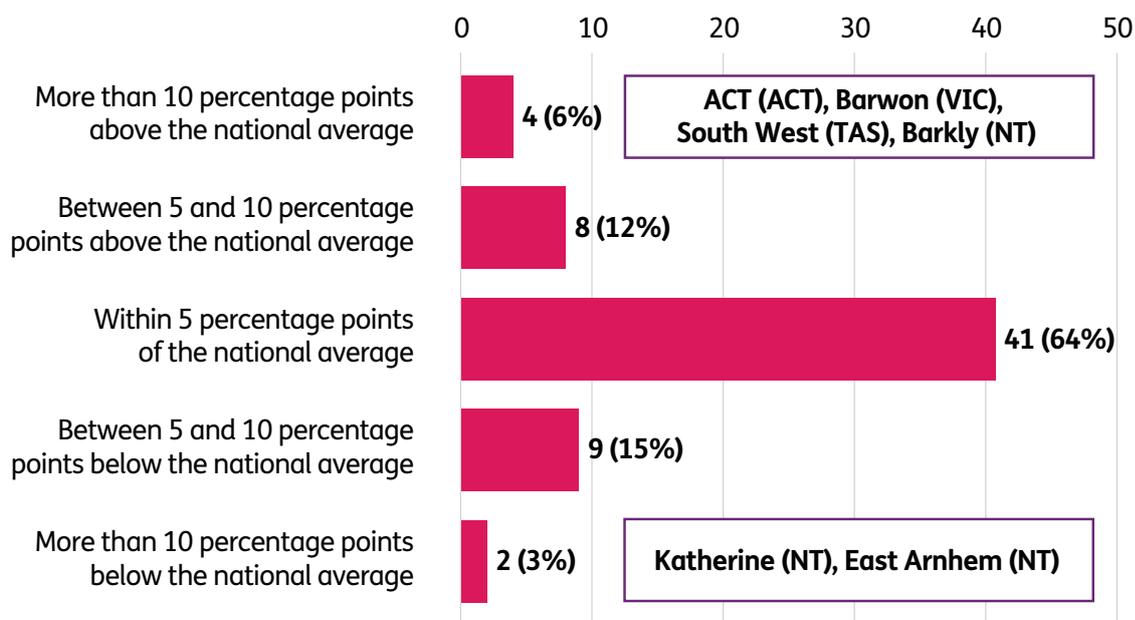
Choice and control

The NDIS outcomes framework questionnaires collect information from participants on whether or not they choose who supports them. The percentage who indicate 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 supported independent living in each region and the length of time participants had been in the Scheme.

Overall, 41 of the 64 regions²³ (64%) in the analysis were within 5 percentage points of the national average, 4 regions (6%) were more than 10 percentage points above the national average, and 2 regions (3%) were more than 10 percentage points below the national average.

The regions comparatively better than other regions were the ACT, Barwon in Victoria, South West in Tasmania, and Barkly in the Northern Territory. All of these regions commenced in the trial phase of the NDIS possibly indicating more mature markets. The regions comparatively worse were Katherine and East Arnhem in the Northern Territory.

Figure 23: Number of bilateral regions - gap to benchmark



²³ 64 of the 80 geographical regions are included in the analysis as these regions commenced prior to 1 July 2018.

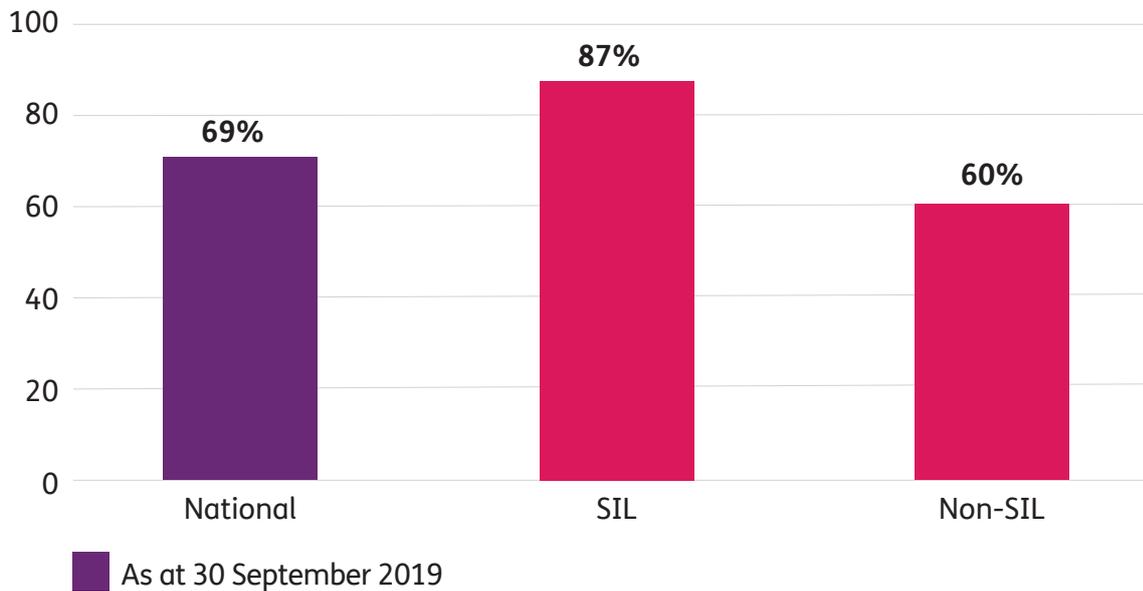
Utilisation

For support provided between 1 January 2019 and 30 June 2019²⁴, data at 30 September 2019 indicated that 69% of support had been utilised nationally. Experience in other Schemes with individual budgets (internationally and in Australia) indicates that plan utilisation is unlikely to be 100%. However, it should be higher than current levels²⁵:

The two biggest drivers of utilisation are:

Whether or not a participant is in supported independent living (SIL) – with participants in SIL utilising more of their plan compared with those not in SIL (**87%** compared with **60%**).

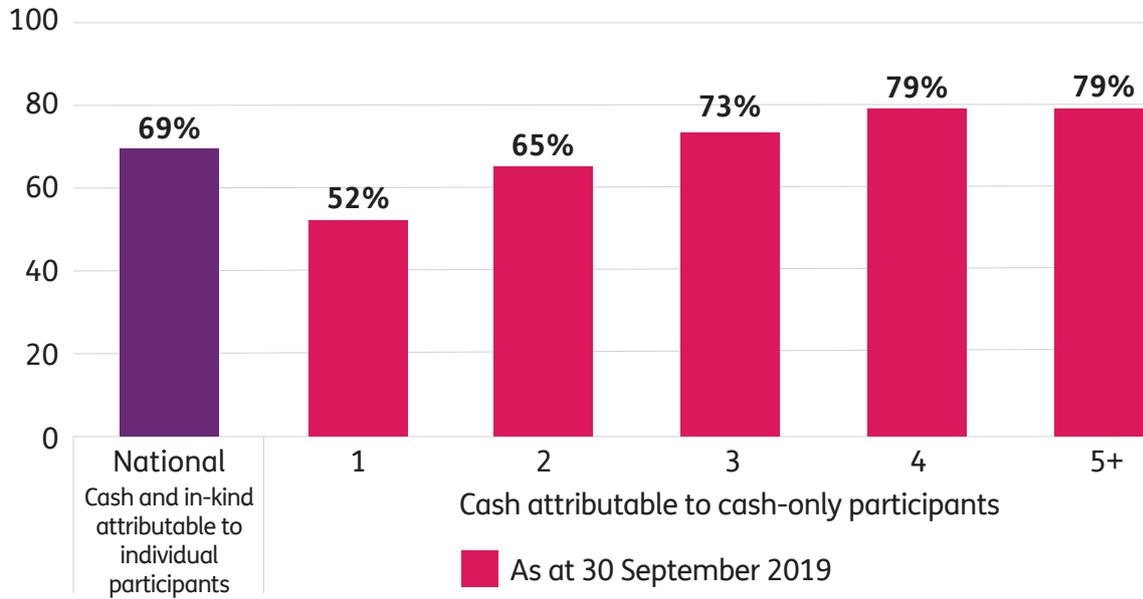
Figure 24: Utilisation of committed supports by SIL status from 1 January 2019 to 30 June 2019 (NATIONAL)²⁶



²⁴ This allows for a three month lag between when support was provided and when it had been paid. Utilisation will increase as more payments for this support period are made.
²⁵ Some of the reasons for plans being under-utilised include: More support was provided informally through family, friends and community; supports being put in plans “just in case” they are required; participants needing more support to implement their plans; providers needing more support to claim for supports provided; and supports being unavailable in the market.
²⁶ Participants receiving in-kind supports are excluded from this analysis as it is not possible to accurately separate in-kind payments and committed amounts between plans. Only Utilisation of committed supports from 1 January 2019 to 30 June 2019 is shown, as experience in the most recent quarter is still emerging.

The amount of time the participant has been in the Scheme – the longer the participant is in the Scheme the more they utilise their plan (52% for participants on their first plans compared with 79% for participants on their fifth plan).

Figure 25: Utilisation of committed supports by plan number from 1 January 2019 to 30 June 2019 (NATIONAL)²⁷



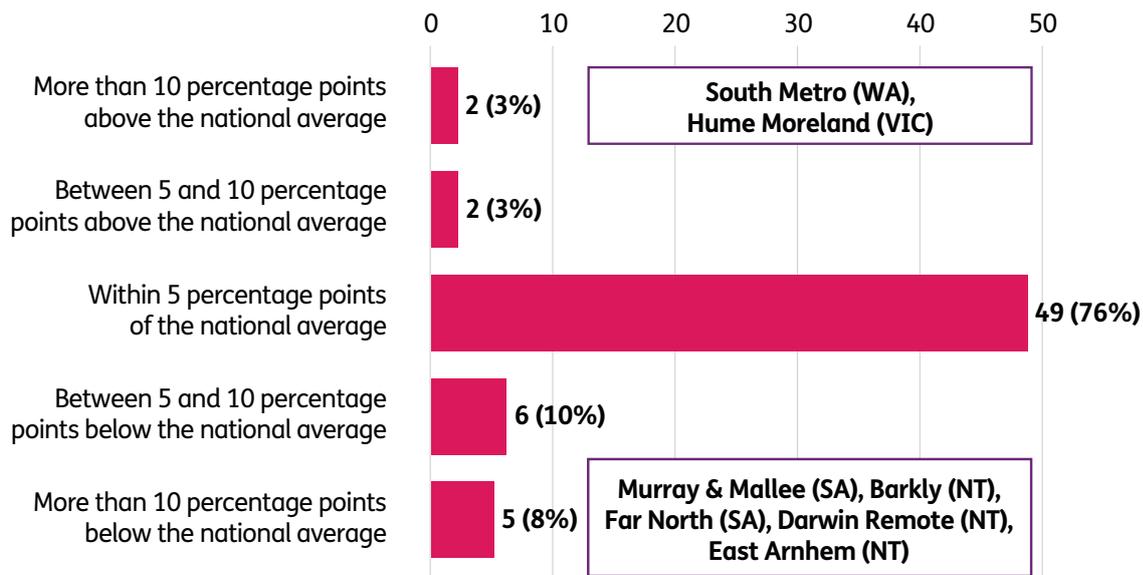
²⁷ Not all in-kind can be allocated to an individual participant. Only Utilisation of committed supports from 1 January 2019 to 30 June 2019 is shown, as experience in the most recent quarter is still emerging.

In addition to these findings, significant insights can be drawn by understanding how utilisation in each geographical region differs from the national average after accounting for the time participants have been in the Scheme and the proportion of participants in SIL.

Overall, 49 of the 64 regions²⁸ (77%) in the analysis are within 5 percentage points of the national average, 2 regions (3%) were more than 10 percentage points above the national average, and 5 regions (8%) were more than 10 percentage points below the national average.

The five regions more than 10 percentage points below the national average are regional and remote regions in South Australia and the Northern Territory.

Figure 26: Number of bilateral regions - gap to benchmark²⁹



²⁸ In one region more than 95% of payments go to the largest ten providers, in one region more than 90-95% of payment go to the largest ten providers, and three regions where 85-90% of payments go to the largest ten providers.

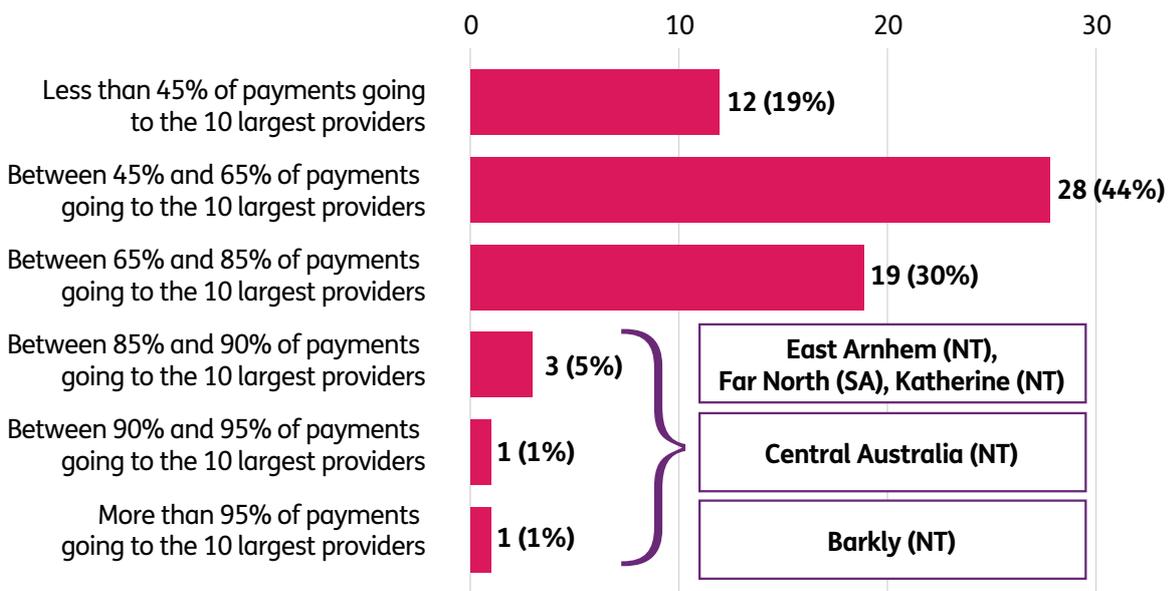
²⁹ 64 of the 80 geographical regions are included in the analysis as these regions commenced prior to 1 July 2018.

Market concentration

Understanding the distribution of payments to service providers in a region 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 region. On average across regions, 63% of payments go to the largest ten providers.

There are five regions where 85% or more of payments go to the largest ten providers (8%)⁷, and twelve regions were less than 45% of payments went to the ten largest providers (19%).

Figure 27: Number of bilateral regions - gap to benchmark³⁰



Overall, the metrics indicate further investment in remote and very remote regions is required to better achieve participant outcomes. As part of market stewardship the NDIA has rolled out a number of initiatives to drive market growth including:

- Pricing increases from 1 July 2019**, including remote loading of 40 per cent (increased from 20 per cent) and very remote loading of 50 per cent (increased from 25 per cent)
- An increased cap in provider travel** claiming from 45 minutes to 60 minutes in regional areas
- An hourly rate** for non-face-to-face care activities conducted on behalf of the participant.
- \$10 million in grants** for the Jobs and Markets fund announced in August 2019, to help address under-supplied markets in the NDIS.
- A range of reforms** to build confidence in the Specialist Disability Accommodation market including changes to rules, policies, pricing and payment settings announced in August.

³⁰ 64 of the 80 geographical regions are included in the analysis as these regions commenced prior to 1 July 2018.

3.3 NDIS Pricing

The NDIA Board and Pricing Reference Group has led extensive work on pricing, following significant consultation with the sector to provide additional transparency and engagement regarding setting NDIS price controls.

Price increases that took effect on 1 July 2019, included:

- increases to therapy prices
- increases to attendant care prices
- increases to remote and very remote loadings
- annual pricing review indexation across various categories of supports
- implementation of temporary transformation payment, changes to billing rules for cancellations and provider travel time.

Pricing Strategy

The NDIA has released the NDIS Pricing Strategy (the Strategy) and the NDIS Efficient Cost Model for Disability Support Workers.

The Strategy is a critical component in transitioning the NDIS markets to cope with significant demand growth, towards reaching the longer-term goal of price deregulation and improving efficiency and quality of care. It recognises that during the transition to deregulation, there is a requirement to significantly increase the supply of disability supports to meet the needs of increased numbers of people entering the scheme.

The Model estimates the full costs of an efficient provider, of engaging workers covered by the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award 2010 (SCHADS Award)³¹. The NDIA has released a paper outlining the model's methodology, input parameters, sources and assumptions to provide greater transparency.

In addition, the NDIA published the full reports of the WA Market Review and the Therapy Services Review, which were conducted in early 2019.

Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) Limited Cost Assumptions Review

During 2019, the NDIA conducted a limited cost assumptions review for SDA to determine if any assumptions require adjusting to stimulate the market. The Review examined whether price limits needed to increase for certain types of SDA buildings, and in a number of geographical regions that were of particular concern to providers. The Review's findings will be published in the second quarter of Financial Year 2019-20.

³¹ Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award 2010 (SCHADS Award)



Harry takes on global challenge

If you told Harry Mezger five years ago he would one day represent his country in sport, he would have laughed.

But in October 2019, that will be the 20-year-old's reality, when he travels to Brisbane to compete at the International Federation for Athletes with Intellectual Impairments (INAS) Global Games, a global sports event for people with an intellectual disability.

"I've always been involved in sport, as a teenager I played tennis and basketball," Harry said. "Now my focus is athletics, running and bike riding, it's been quite a big change."

That change came for Harry when he joined a local inclusive sports training group, funded by the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

Harry, who has an intellectual disability, joined the NDIS 12 months ago and now receives funding that supports him with his training, daily living skills and increasing his independence.

Harry says his disability has opened up opportunities that he may not have had otherwise. That positive outlook has been a big contributor in Harry's ascent to representing Australia. "It still hasn't sunk in yet, it's every kid's dream and it's really special."

4

Part Four:

Information, linkage and capacity building (ILC)

Significant improvements to mainstream interface issues, and grant rounds for ILC open across multiple programs.

4.1 Information, linkage and capacity building

Grant rounds for ILC investment programs open during the quarter (the Individual Capacity Building Program, the Mainstream Capacity Building Program and the Economic and Community Participation program).

The Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) component of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) aims to build the capacity of people with disability in Australia to achieve their goals and for them to be included in all aspects of a community life.

In December 2018, the NDIA introduced the 'ILC Strategy Towards 2022' which guides the investment of ILC funds from 2019-20 to 2021-22. Through the strategy, the NDIA provides grants to organisations that will provide ILC projects in the community that enable all people with disability, their families and their carers to benefit from a more inclusive, accessible and connected Australia. ILC is a catalyst for change and is all about creating greater inclusion for people with disability.

The NDIA has invested \$65.9 million during 2019 through a combination of interim grant rounds and additional bridging support funding to states and territory governments to help ensure an orderly transition to the new ILC Investment Strategy, prior to the commissioning of new programs during 2019-20.

The ILC Strategy Towards 2022 sees ILC administered through four discrete, but complementary programs:

National Information Program – providing accessible, quality and consistent information about disability types and service and support options in both community and mainstream settings (complementing the proposed National Disability Information Gateway)

Individual Capacity Building Program – delivered primarily through a national network of Disabled Peoples Organisations and Families Organisations (DPO/FO), this program will enable systematic, nationwide access to peer support, mentoring and other skills building

Mainstream Capacity Building Program – ensuring equity of access to and increase inclusion of people with disability in mainstream services, with an initial focus on mainstream health services.

Economic and Community Participation Program – increasing the social and economic participation, including employment outcomes, of people with disability.

As part of the ILC Investment Strategy the NDIA will continue the progressive roll out of these programs throughout the remainder of 2019.

The National Information Program (NIP) opened on Friday 5 April 2019. This round aims to increase the accessibility, quality and consistency of information about disability types, current services and support options available to people with disability, carers and families throughout Australia. This grant round is the first full program of the ILC Strategy to be commissioned and the outcomes were announced on Friday 11 October 2019.

The Individual Capacity Building Program (ICBP) opened on 19 August 2019 with up to \$100 million (excl. GST) available. The ICBP builds on the extensive evidence base for the use of peer support in building skills for people with disability and focuses on a national network of organisations run by and for people with disability, or their families and carers, to become the primary delivery mechanism for the Agency for peer support, mentoring and other skills building for people with disability, carers and families. This grant round is currently under assessment with results to be announced in December 2019.

The Mainstream Capacity Building Program (MCBP) and Economic and Community Participation (ECPP) Program both opened on 9 September 2019 with up to \$64 million and \$58 million (excl. GST) respectively available. These rounds seek to build the capacity of the community to create opportunities for people with disability to contribute to community prosperity and participate in community life and drive practice change in the delivery of critical mainstream services towards meeting the needs of people with disability, families and carers. Results of these grants rounds are expected to be announced in February 2020.

Figure 28: Summary of ILC Towards 2022 grant rounds³²

Task	National Information Program	Individual Capacity Building Program	Mainstream Capacity Building Program	Economic and Community Participation Program
Value of round	<p>\$59m excl. GST</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 34% allocation in 2019/20 · 33% allocation in 2020/21 · 33% allocation in 2021/22 	<p>Up to \$100m excl. GST</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 50% allocation in 2019/20 · 25% allocation in 2020/21 · 25% allocation in 2021/22 	<p>Up to \$64m excl. GST</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 60% allocation in 2019/20 · 20% allocation in 2020/21 · 20% allocation in 2021/22 	<p>Up to \$58m excl. GST</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 60% allocation in 2019/20 · 20% allocation in 2020/21 · 20% allocation in 2021/22
Grant round application period	5 April – 10 May 2019	19 August – 30 September 2019	9 September – 21 October 2019	9 September – 21 October 2019
Assessment period	June – August 2019	September – November 2019	November – December 2019	November – December 2019
Ministerial announcement	October 2019	December 2019	February 2020	February 2020
Grant agreements finalised	October / November 2019	February 2020	March 2020	March 2020

³² Individual Capacity Building Program, Mainstream Capacity Building Program and Economic and Community Participation Programs have a Round Two commissioning of a 50%/50% allocation.

4.2 Improvements to mainstream interface issues

A key focus for the COAG Disability Reform Council (DRC) is for Commonwealth and States and Territories to actively work together to deliver meaningful progress on policy issues that will improve the NDIS experience for participants, their families and carers. The NDIS Board and Agency has worked closely with the COAG DRC to deliver clarity and a better experience for participants.

The NDIA is now providing disability-related health supports.

Disability Related Health Supports

At the June DRC meeting, Commonwealth and State and Territory Disability Ministers clarified the boundaries between the NDIS and health-related services to ensure NDIS participants receive the supports they need. From 1 October 2019, NDIS participants commenced receiving funding for the disability-related health supports they need as a direct result of their disability, and as part of their daily life, through their NDIS plans.

For the participants who fall into this category (or for the participants where disability related health supports are required), most will have these included in their initial NDIS plan or at their next plan review. The Agency has released an Operational Guideline and also updated the 2019-20 Price Guide and Support Catalogue to include around 90 disability-related health supports now funded under the NDIS.

A suite of information for participants, providers and the health sector, including Easy English versions, and further information is available on the Disability-Related Health Supports page on the NDIS website.

Further improvements to interface issues

Building on the momentum of major reforms announced at the last DRC meeting on 28 June 2019, a number of initiatives were announced following the 10 October DRC meeting. These include:

- A commitment by Council members to work together to improve access and experiences for participants with psychosocial disability in the NDIS, as well as addressing interface issues between the NDIS and mainstream mental health systems.
- The introduction of Justice Liaison Officers by the NDIS to work across state and territory justice systems. Their role will be to provide a single point of contact for workers within state and territory justice systems to coordinate support for NDIS participants in youth and adult justice systems.
- An approach to improve transport supports provided under the NDIS. More ongoing work by the NDIA, Commonwealth and state and territory officials will be done to support this change, including interim measures to increase transport funding for NDIS participants who are significant users of state and territory Taxi Subsidy Schemes.
- Working closely with states and territories to develop and implement a new approach to maintaining critical supports with a focus on holistic service delivery arrangements which are participant-centric and based on the principle of choice and control.



Charlotte's family say 'thank you'

Bundaberg father, Nathan Straume, said the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) has changed his family's lives and opened up a world of possibilities for his 11-year-old daughter.

An only child, Charlotte, is non-verbal with Cerebral Palsy. Not in a financial position to buy equipment, let alone build a new house to meet his daughter's needs, Nathan has welcomed the incredible support his family has received from the NDIS.

Since joining the scheme in April 2018, Nathan said they've be so grateful for a raft of supports, some of which include ramps around their home, car modifications, power assist fastening wheelchair wheels and a surround bed so Charlotte is safe and secure at night.

Nathan said prior to the NDIS it was tough for him, and partner Carolyn, financially, physically and emotionally, without adequate supports.

"That's where the NDIS has been life-changing. It has given us back quality time to spend with Charlotte and time for ourselves.

"The NDIS has created all of this, so I want to thank everyone who fought to get it over the line, from the bottom of my heart, for what you've done and what you all continue to do."

A financially sustainable Scheme focuses on outcomes that will support participants now and across their lifetime.

Since the commencement of the Scheme, there has been a large increase in the number of participants, the amount of support committed in plans, and payments to providers on behalf of participants each year, reflecting the rapid roll-out of the NDIS. From 2017-18 to 2018-19, participants increased by 66%, committed support increased by 88%, and payments increased by 86%.

The Scheme is projected to continue to grow and to reach about 500,000 participants within the next five years, of which about 478,000 are expected to be aged 0 to 64. This is equivalent to a prevalence rate of 2.1% of the projected Australian general population aged 0 to 64, consistent with the original estimate by the Productivity Commission in 2011.

Scheme costs for all participants are projected to be about 0.9 per cent of GDP for 2019-20, 1.2 per cent in 2022-23, and 1.4 per cent for 2029-30. This includes participants who remain in the Scheme past 65 years, noting that the Commonwealth has committed to funding these participants.

This projection is in line with the estimates shown in the 2017 Productivity Commission report on National Disability Insurance Scheme Costs at 2022-23, after allowing for costs not included in the Productivity Commission estimate, such as the introduction of school transport, personal care in schools, developmental delay and the incomplete implementation of the National Injury Insurance Scheme.

Figure 29: Committed supports (\$m) and payments

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20 YTD*
Active participants	7,285	17,155	29,719	89,610	172,324	286,014	311,774
Total committed (\$m)	132.7	496.8	939.2	3,236.4	7,746.9	14,589.6	5,322.5
Total paid (\$m)	85.8	370.9	704.1	2,182.2	5,408.6	10,074.6	2,993.9
% utilised to date	65%	75%	75%	67%	70%	69%	

* There is a lag between when support is provided and when it is paid - hence, payments will increase.

The drivers of costs to the NDIS include the number of participants, the amount of support allocated to each plan, how that allocated amount will change over time, the utilisation of individual supports, and the rate at which participants exit the Scheme. It is the responsibility of the NDIA to monitor primary pressures, detect any associated risks and manage them appropriately, using the insurance-based structure as a means to evaluate emerging experience against expectations. Some pressures on the NDIS have been identified and are being responsibly managed.

Current pressures include:

- Plan budgets and support payments made to participants continue to grow by more than would be expected solely due to normal inflation and ageing. For example, the support costs for participants in supported independent living are a material component of Scheme cost that is continuing to increase significantly above normal inflation.
- The Scheme is facing a number of pressures in entry and funding decisions, particularly in relation to how the Scheme interfaces with mainstream services, and community and informal supports. This is testing the boundaries of who can access the Scheme and what constitutes “reasonable and necessary” supports.

Management responses include:

Participant Pathway Review

The NDIA is working on strengthening the ‘outcomes focus’ of the Participant Pathway Review to improve participant satisfaction and enable individuals to reach their goals, while also increasing the consistency and reliability of access and plan budget decisions.

Reference package and guided planning process

To better align a participant’s support package with their level of function, the NDIA introduced the reference package and guided planning process, which works to ensure that the right assessment questions and tools are being used to inform plan decisions. A review has commenced to incorporate new learnings since the reference package and guided planning process was first implemented.

Supported Independent Living (SIL)

The NDIA is working on consistent and equitable decisions for those seeking access to SIL, which constitutes a large proportion of NDIS cost.



Taylor swims to stardom

When Taylor Anderton dives into the pool at this year's INAS Global Games, she'll be listening for the cheers from her family and friends. The Gold Coast local will represent Australia in the global event for people with an intellectual disability in her home state in October.

"This will be the first time they have had swimmers with Down syndrome in the Global Games team," said Taylor's mum Catherine.

"We're just really proud and excited for Taylor that she will have friends and family coming to watch.

"Taylor has three goals in life, to keep swimming for Australia, to get a job and to live independently."

After joining the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) in October 2018, those goals are becoming even more realistic. "The NDIS has definitely made a difference, we are achieving those goals and the NDIS has really helped.

A strong and dedicated NDIS community delivers the best possible experience for participants.

6.1 Building a high performing NDIA

Increased training is being provided to staff and partners to improve the participant experience.

The Honourable Stuart Robert MP, the Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme, announced that the NDIA will be filling an additional 800 Australian Public Service positions capable of exercising delegations under the NDIS legislation, over the course of the 2019-20 financial year, taking the APS Average Staffing Level to 4,000 from 1 July 2020.

As at 30 September 2019, the total NDIS workforce was 11,266 including 3,613 Australian Public Service employees, 2,189 labour hire contractors, and 5,464 people employed by NDIA's Partners. This is an increase of the total workforce (including NDIA Partners) since the end of 2018-19 financial year of 1.85 per cent. The NDIA Australian Public Service employee proportion has grown 3.38 per cent.

During the first quarter of the 2019-20 financial year, the Service Delivery NDIA workforce increased by 3.28 per cent with a total headcount increase of 294 as at 30 September 2019. The Service Delivery Workforce comprises total staffing within the Participant Planning Experience Group (Access, Planning and Support), the Participant Focus Group (Reviews and Complaint Resolution), Agency Contact Centre Partners and Partners in the Community.

During the quarter, approximately 800 new planners and Local Area Coordinators participated in the 6-week New Starter Induction Program that includes face-to-face, eLearning and on-the-job training. Modules include:

- disability-specific training;
- agency-specific training, including work health and safety, fraud awareness and NDIA induction; and
- service delivery specific training on the participant pathway. This includes reasonable and necessary supports, typical support packages, mainstream support interfaces, housing, in-kind funding, school leaver employment support, self-management and Assistive Technology.

The NDIA Board and Agency recognises the need to do more and is collaborating with peak bodies and other stakeholders to develop training material prior to national deployment.

Upskilling to support the rollout of a new Workload Manager tool concluded in Victoria and commenced in New South Wales. A briefing was developed and deployed to approximately 650 team leaders, to support the Disability Related Health Support changes to commence 1 October 2019.

The rollout of the NDIA Just Brilliant Leadership Series is continuing with 422 staff commencing the Learning to Lead program (aimed at entry level team leaders) and 178 commencing the Leadership Excellence program (aimed at senior level leaders). Further, the NDIA has also developed 'Success Profiles' for key service delivery roles in access, Local Area Coordination and planning. The Success Profiles set out the knowledge, experience, personal attributes and behaviours required to be successful in these role.

The NDIA achieved an 80.1% response rate in the annual Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) census. The results were received in July 2019 and are used to track improvement in workplace culture and engagement. The overall Engagement index score increased from 74% in 2018 to 76% in 2019.

The NDIA Board has appointed a new CEO, Mr Martin Hoffman, to lead the Agency. Martin has extensive experience in both the public and private sectors leading service delivery and digital transformation. Martin starts on 4 November 2019.

The NDIA Board also acknowledged the invaluable leadership of Ms Vicki Rundle PSM, who has acted as CEO since April this year. The Board of the NDIA is indebted to Vicki for her leadership, dedication and commitment.

6.2 Collaborating with NDIS stakeholders

The NDIS is improving participant experience with the support of the disability community Board and senior management engagement with States and Territories

Following the 28 June 2019 Disability Reform Council (DRC) meeting, the Chairman and NDIA Acting CEO have been undertaking a program of engagement activities with every State and Territory Disability Minister and their senior officials. The objective of these meetings is to better understand, and develop responses to, jurisdictional specific issues. While the NDIS is a national model, it is recognised that specific issues depend on location, and existing jurisdictional service arrangements. Key themes emerging from these engagements include: lower than expected utilisation of plans, challenges related to thin markets and the need to effectively respond to crisis situations. Through a comprehensive program of engagement, the NDIA and the States and Territories have agreed on these issues and recognise the need for solutions. Several programs of work will commence to address key findings, in a way that responds to local challenges and pressures, and draws on local expertise.

Roundtables

The Prime Minister and the Minister for the NDIS have undertaken a series of roundtables across the country meeting with participants, carers, sector stakeholders and providers over the last quarter. The roundtables provide the opportunity for participants and other stakeholders to discuss their NDIS experiences and ideas for further improving the Scheme.

In addition, the NDIA Board and management undertake regular roving visits to locations across Australia to better understand local issues, and hear directly from participants, providers and NDIA service delivery staff and partners.

The NDIA Board Chairman and the Acting CEO also held roundtable sessions in South Australia, Western Australia, Northern Territory and Tasmania to meet with participants and hear firsthand about their NDIS experiences. Further participant roundtables are planned for quarter two.

These roundtables complement a regular series of engagement activities undertaken by Board members and management, including regular meetings with key participant, provider and sector groups, Commonwealth and State government officials and other key stakeholders.

The South East Queensland CALD Community Engagement Initiative

The NDIA has a range of targeted initiatives to ensure that people from a culturally and linguistically diverse background are included in the NDIS. The initiatives are being trialled in Queensland in the Local Government Areas of Logan, Redlands, Brisbane, Ipswich and Moreton Bay between June and October 2019. For example, one targeted initiative includes on-the-ground support from a newly developed community engagement role for a Cultural Community Liaison Officer (CCLO). The new CCLOs participated in interpreter workshops in September, and sessions have been scheduled with organisations dealing with trauma and health for new settlers. This initiative will also have input from AMPARO Advocacy, as a local consultant, and includes an evaluation process as part of the approach. Once evaluated the CALD initiative can be scaled across multiple jurisdictions to ensure a focus on CALD participants being supported to access the NDIS.

Information Linkages and Capacity Building webinar

On 1 August 2019, the NDIA hosted an Information Linkages and Capacity Building webinar focussing on 'getting your ILC grant pitch right'. 2,038 people registered for the webinar and 1,364 watched the live seminar with hundreds more viewing the recorded version once published to the NDIS website. The panel included NDIA staff with substantial experience with ILC grant rounds. The panel discussed upcoming ILC grant rounds, and how to prepare an application.

Community and Mainstream Engagement

The NDIA regularly holds education and information sessions. In this quarter more than 1000 community information and education sessions have been held across Australia. These sessions aim to ensure participants, their families and supporting services are ready for pre-planning and increase understanding of the NDIS. A key community engagement focus this quarter has been the delivery of accurate Disability Reform Council disability-related health support information and guidance to over 200 local and regional health mainstream interface organisations and agencies. The NDIA has also been engaging with all government, independent and Catholic mainstream school systems to build awareness of the importance of school inclusion for participants to progress their education to employment goals. Education sessions have also been coordinated for GPs and allied health practitioners to increase understanding of NDIS requirements for evidence of the functional impact of disability. Through these targeted engagement initiatives the Community and Mainstream Engagement teams are able to report on key themes and gather feedback to ensure the Agency is responsive and participant-centred.

6.3 Public data sharing policy and the data and insights website

The release of the NDIA's public sharing policy and the increased access to NDIA data and analysis will help improve participant outcomes and improve market innovation.

Public data sharing policy

The NDIA released its Public Data Sharing Policy on 30 September 2019. The policy includes information on how data is shared with participants, providers and other stakeholders.

The NDIS Public Data Sharing Policy is aligned to the draft Data Sharing and Release Act (on track to be legislated in mid-2020), and risks associated with data sharing are assessed using the Five Safes framework, as advised by the interim Commonwealth Data Commissioner.

Underpinning all data-sharing decisions are a set of principles. These are:

1. The Participant is at the centre of everything we do: This principle states that all decisions must be made with NDIS Participants' collective interests in mind, as well as be respectful to the rights of individuals.

2. NDIA is the custodian of NDIS 'protected' data: This principle reinforces the role of NDIA to act with integrity in the collection, use and disclosure of NDIS data.

3. Ethical use: This principle states that decisions to share data should align with community expectations and standards.

4. Responsible release: This principle addresses the need to consider ways to mitigate the risk of data misuse or misinterpretation once released.

5. Lawful release: This principle reinforces that all decisions to share data must meet the legal requirements of relevant legislation, including NDIS Act 2013 and Privacy Act (Cth) 1988.

The NDIS Public Data Sharing Policy also states the ways in which data is released:

Open data release refers to data that is released to the general public without any access restrictions.

Tailored data release refers to data that is released to individuals or organisations to support a specific purpose. Tailored data releases are documented using a Data Sharing Agreement (DSA). The DSA includes the conditions that NDIA require the recipient comply with in order to mitigate specific risks.

Insights forums

The NDIA hosted Insights forums across four capital cities in July and August. The Insights Forums were designed to bring together representatives of peak bodies, providers, academics and government stakeholders for the purpose of sharing information. The presentations included key data accumulated on the Scheme so far and explore what it means in terms of challenges and future opportunities. The intent of presenting our data is to build knowledge, stimulate curiosity and lay strong foundations for future collaboration and innovation.

Data and insights website

On 30 July 2019, NDIA released the Data and Insights webpages on [ndis.gov.au](https://www.ndis.gov.au). Open data in the form of data cubes and synthesised reports (including Participant and Family/Carer Outcome reports, employment deep-dive analysis, and a deep dive on participants with autism) were released. In addition, material from the Insights forums conducted in Sydney, Perth, Melbourne and Brisbane were loaded onto the website on 22 August 2019.

From 31 July to 30 September, there had been over 10,000 total visits to the Data and Insights section by 7,200 individuals.

On 30 September 2019, the NDIA released its first update to the Data and Insights page. The update included interactive visualisations, reports on the NDIS market and participants with a psychosocial disability, and additional data cubes.

6.4 The NDIS contact centre

Customer experience improves for first point of contact with the NDIS

The provider responsible for operating the NDIS Contact Centre has made consistent improvements to call response times, wait times and abandoned call rates for enquires made to the NDIS.

Between July 2019 and the end of September 2019 the Contact Centre answered 310,475 phone calls and responded to over 166,000 emails.

The **average answer speed** is consistently at **31 seconds**.

The Contact Centre is contracted to reach a **weekly service level** of 80% of calls answered within 60 seconds. At end of the September 2019 quarter it was achieving a service level of just over **82%**.

Average **abandonment rates** are reliably sitting at 1.6%

The rate of **enquiries being resolved** within the first response to the caller has risen from 85% in June 2019 to **88%** in September 2019.



Tara is living her dream

When ‘Dora the Explorer and the Lost City of Gold’ opens in cinemas across Australia next week, one young woman from Brisbane’s northern suburbs will be more excited than most.

Tara Lloyd, 19, has Down syndrome and lives at home with her parents and older brother. For as long as she can remember, Tara has dreamed of forging a career as a performer.

Last year she won a role as an extra on the ‘Dora’ movie, her first break into the film industry. Her success came after years of hard work studying drama and performing both in and out of school.

Last year was a big year for Tara in all sorts of ways – joining the National Disability Insurance Scheme, signing on with Brisbane-based talent group Agency 888 and successfully finishing Year 12 at a mainstream school.

Since finishing school Tara has gone onto study a Certificate III of Screen and Media at TAFE and has also done some short courses offered by the National Institute of Dramatic Arts (NIDA Open).

“NDIS funding provides about eight hours a week flexible support for Tara, which she uses to pay for a support worker to help her with learning her lines for the NIDA courses, for her attendance at the Friday group planning sessions and for support to attend the gym,” Tara’s mum, Louise says.

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