# Guiding Principles: Worker Mobility Reduction Payments 1 September 2020

The safety of all NDIS participants and their support workers is the highest priority. Staff working across multiple residential service sites presents one of the highest risks for unintentionally transmitting COVID-19 to other workers and residents.

Workforce restrictions currently in place in Victoria under public health orders place a legal obligation on employers to restrict movement or workers across sites as much as possible, and for workers to advise their employer of where they work for other employers to assist employers restrict mobility.

The Victorian and Commonwealth Governments have agreed to support workers and providers to restrict movement across sites by providing additional financial assistance. The guiding principles for worker mobility reduction payments have been established to limit individual workers from working at no more than two sites as much as possible, across disability residential services and to ensure the continuity of service delivery.

## **Objectives**

* To keep people with a disability and disability workers in Victoria protected from the risks of acquiring COVID-19 in disability residential settings.
* To reduce the risk of disability workers unintentionally transmitting COVID-19 by working across multiple sites.

## **Scope**

* The arrangements apply across all of Victoria to disability residential services.

## **Timeframe**

* Payments will be eligible from 1 September, and will operate until 31 December 2020.

## **Overall Guiding Principles**

* Payments will be made to assist providers to restrict work at multiple sites as much as possible, thereby minimising risks around cross-infection. This includes limiting individual workers from working at no more than two residential sites as much as possible.
* An approach will be taken in the Victorian residential disability service sector that recognises the different payment arrangements currently in place for both NDIS and state funded ‘transfer’ providers who are transitioning to the NDIS.
* The arrangements are designed to support existing public health orders and other guidance by governments in relation to preventing the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.
* Payments are made in recognition of the higher cost faced by providers in needing to change rosters to minimise workers being at multiple sites.
* Providers are accountable for ensuring that payments are directed at offsetting higher costs which will include compensating workers for reduced working hours.
* The administrative burden on providers will be minimised as far as possible.
* Compliance and audit arrangements will be calibrated reflecting the relative size of payments and utilising existing audit/compliance arrangements that already apply to payments made to state funded transfer and NDIS providers. This will include the provision of periodic information by providers on levels of mobility of its workforce, e.g. numbers of workers per site.

## **Expectations of providers**

Service Providers will:

* Act reasonably and in accordance with Victoria’s public heath orders to reduce worker mobility, these guidelines and workplace laws.
* Adhere to the guidelines to preserve the safety of residents and their workers.
* Seek to ensure coordination of rosters of workers to maximise the number of hours to be offered to workers and minimise reduced hours offered by providers.
* Provide employees or casual staff with extra shifts, where operational requirements allow, to make up for shifts they have foregone.
* Provide evidence of reasonable effort to restrict mobility including the provision of periodic information on mobility of workers linked to payment arrangements.

## **Stakeholder engagement**

* Governments are committed to ongoing engagement with all relevant stakeholders, including unions, peak bodies, and advocacy organisations.

## **Operational principles**

Payment

* The Department of Health and Human Services will make payment to state funded ‘transfer’ providers though existing contractual funding mechanisms and acquittal of actual costs.
The National Disability Insurance Agency will make payment to NDIS registered providers through existing funding mechanisms.

Compliance and Audit

* All providers will ensure sufficient evidence is available of relevant costs incurred consistent with existing compliance and audit requirements.
This would include periodic reporting on the level of mobility of workers across sites e.g. the number of workers working across one, two or more sites, based on monthly roster cycles.