



Building the  
National Disability Insurance Scheme  
**PROGRESS REPORT: YEAR TWO**

JULY 2015

National  
**disabilityinsurance**  
Agency

# Foreword from Chairman Bruce Bonyhady



The National Disability Insurance Scheme is now 24 months old. We are two years into pioneering a great social and economic reform. One that will provide a better life for over 400,000 Australians and their families and carers.

We are now operating across the whole of the ACT, the Barkly region in the Northern Territory, Perth Hills in Western Australia, the Hunter in NSW, Barwon in Victoria, in South Australia, where we are providing services for children starting with age six and under, and in Tasmania, where we are serving young people, aged between 15 and 24 years.

Each trial site has its unique characteristics and in operationalising the NDIS we are tailoring it to individual, community and regional needs.

In two years we have come a long way.

This is our second Progress Report and is part of our commitment to keep the Australian community informed as we implement the NDIS across the country.

This Progress Report examines how we are performing against our goals.

At the heart of how we are performing is the lived experience of people with disability who are now being supported by the scheme. From our trial sites, the feedback we have received has been very positive. Our measurement for participant satisfaction currently sits at 1.6 – on a scale where -2 is extremely dissatisfied and +2 is extremely satisfied. This progress is testament to our approach and to the hard work of all those who have contributed over the last two years.

The National Disability Insurance Agency is also on track in our approach as a learning organisation. By trialing the scheme over the last two years we have continually looked for opportunities to learn. This is crucial to our development as we build a world leading scheme, providing a lifetime of fairness, security and opportunity for those with disability.

We recognise that with the size of what we seek to achieve, improvement can always be made and we are fostering a culture embracing this. We are actively seeking out and

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listening to the feedback of participants, the disability sector and the broader community. We are collecting evidence and getting insights into how best to operate across different trial sites, different age groups, different types of disabilities, and different cultures. We will use what we have learnt from these trials, as we implement the scheme nationally. We have heard from the Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS and an independent Citizens' Jury about both what is working well and what needs further attention. We learn, listen, build and deliver improvements.

We are pursuing significant opportunities for new and innovative partnerships with the service delivery and technology sectors, as we all work together to serve our communities through mutually beneficial partnerships.

The smart use of technology is also an essential part of who we are. The NDIA is committed to using technology to connect people in new and dynamic ways, to develop innovative solutions for participants to improve their lives, to share knowledge with one another and to find more efficient ways of providing supports to people with disability, their families and carers.

Examples of the use of smart technology are showcased throughout the Progress Report and technological innovation will remain an ongoing focus for the NDIS going forward.

On behalf of the NDIS Board, I trust this Progress Report helps you to understand both how far we have come and that we are on track on our long journey to provide the best supports to people with disability.

There is still a lot of hard work ahead, as we continue to listen, learn and implement the scheme for all Australians. But it is also a time of unparalleled opportunity and our successes so far show that we are on track to make the National Disability Insurance Scheme one of Australia's great economic and social reforms.

I encourage every Australian to continue to share in this remarkable journey as we build a world leading NDIS.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bruce Bonyhady".

## Introduction from CEO David Bowen



The National Disability Insurance Agency is working hard to ensure the NDIS meets and exceeds community expectations to provide fair, reasonable and necessary supports for people with disability. We are looking to support people with a disability and their families through world-class support and services.

Building the National Disability Insurance Scheme is a once in a lifetime opportunity. From the outset, we knew that our journey to deliver the NDIS to all Australians who need it would take time. We have implemented the NDIS through a staged and careful transition, underpinned by a sound insurance approach and robust evidence.

We are now two years into our trial phase, transforming what everyone agrees was an under-resourced and poorly-performing disability sector into something bigger, better, fairer and more sustainable.

We have achieved a significant amount over the past two years in establishing seven trial sites and welcoming over 16,000 people into the scheme. However, the task ahead is still substantial. In the next few years we need to grow the Agency's capability from 700 staff to potentially several thousand. We are going to increase our participant intake numbers from just over 16,000 to around 460,000.

This is why the National Disability Insurance Agency is committed to a listen, learn, build and deliver approach. We are putting in place an operating style whereby we reflect on what we have heard from our stakeholders - most importantly people with disability, their families and carers - and then implement improvements to strengthen our operations. This includes practical improvements - like the implementation of an outcomes framework which will track and benchmark participant progress over time. As part of this, we are building a values based organisation.

One of the real highlights of this last year has been defining and embedding our organisational values into the day-to-day operation of our Agency.

This has included working with staff to define a set of values, capabilities and behaviors which set out how we want to operate as an Agency.

We are now working with stakeholders and staff to map our culture to ensure we are living our organisational values.

We have asked an independent Citizens' Jury to review the progress of the Agency in achieving our goals and to identify where we need to focus our efforts to deliver the best possible support to people with a disability and their families.

We are committed to co-designing the scheme with people who understand it best – people with disability, their families and carers.

All of this is intended to ensure that as an organisation, we are in the best possible position to give people with disability the supports they need to live an ordinary life and exercise choice and control.

As well as having a values based Agency, we must continuously monitor the Scheme through a robust insurance approach and evidence base. Using this knowledge we must continue to identify and implement improvements. Many of these improvements are highlighted in this Year 2 Progress Report.

I'm proud of what has been achieved so far through our listen, learn, build, deliver approach. I'm confident this approach will continue to serve the Agency as we work to bring the NDIS to every Australian who needs it.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Bowen".

# NDIA Strategic Overview

The Agency's vision, mission and goals support the positive transformation of Australia's disability sector and are underpinned by our dedicated culture and the effective use of technology.

## VISION

Optimising social and economic independence and full participation for people with disability.

## MISSION

Building and managing a world leading National Disability Insurance Scheme for all Australians.

## GOALS

1. People with disability are in control and have choices, based on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
2. The National Disability Insurance Scheme is financially sustainable and is governed using insurance principles.
3. The community has ownership, confidence and pride in the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the National Disability Insurance Agency.

## CULTURE

The Agency values assurance, empowerment, responsibility, learning and integrity.

## TECHNOLOGY

Our work is underpinned by a modern technological approach.

# Culture and Values

The delivery of the NDIS is driven by the fundamental principle that people with disability, their families and carers are at the heart of the scheme. It is therefore essential that the NDIA has the right values at its core. This means that how we deliver the scheme is just as important as what we are doing.

The NDIA is building a culture around our core values of:

- Assurance
- Empowerment
- Responsibility
- Learning
- Integrity

We are committed to the value of **assurance** by providing a participant-focused approach which includes funding for high quality, equitable and effective supports over a person's lifetime. Our work is focused on respecting and accommodating the diversity of our participants as we build this sense of assurance.

We are working to **empower** participants to make genuine choices and to exercise control over their lives. To do this, we work in partnership with participants, their families and carers to understand their experiences, aspirations and ideas. The unique voice of each participant is central to our work.

We are committed to the value of shared **responsibility**. This means working with the disability sector and broader Australian community to create inclusive communities which support people with disability to maximise their potential and achieve economic and social participation.

We see every task and interaction as a **learning** opportunity and a chance to continually improve our performance. We do this by starting small, collecting good data, confirming what works and then applying these lessons as we grow. Listening and learning underpins our growth as an organisation.

At the core of the scheme and the Agency is the value of **integrity**. Acting with integrity is essential to building a successful and sustainable scheme. We demonstrate this commitment by embedding a co-design approach across the organisation. We have a further commitment to employ more than 15 per cent of staff with disability. This will ensure we keep people with disability at the heart of the scheme.



# Smart Technology

The delivery of the NDIS is underpinned by a modern, technological approach, fostering innovation. Technology plays an essential role in delivering positive and sustainable outcomes for people with disability.

The Agency is committed to using technology to connect people in new and dynamic ways. We look to develop innovative solutions for participants to improve their lives, to share knowledge with one another about what works and to find more efficient ways of providing our services.

The NDIA approach to technology focuses on:

- Connection
- Innovation
- Knowledge
- Efficiency

The Agency is looking to have a highly flexible technology platform which meets the needs of participants, carers, families and service providers.

Over the next year we will be designing and building a new ICT platform, in collaboration with the Commonwealth Department of Human Services and Department of Social Services. This will support our operations during the transition to full scheme and beyond.

Our new ICT system will:

- allow participants to connect and interact, including those in rural and remote areas;
- enable innovation in the way that people with a disability are supported;
- allow us to efficiently collect, analyse and share information on disability services; and,

- streamline our processes and procedures, and improve the quality of our services.

Our new technology platform will also allow providers and the market to engage with us on the fundamentals of payments and reporting, and leverage new processes and technology to achieve sustainable economic benefits through economies of scale, skill and scope.

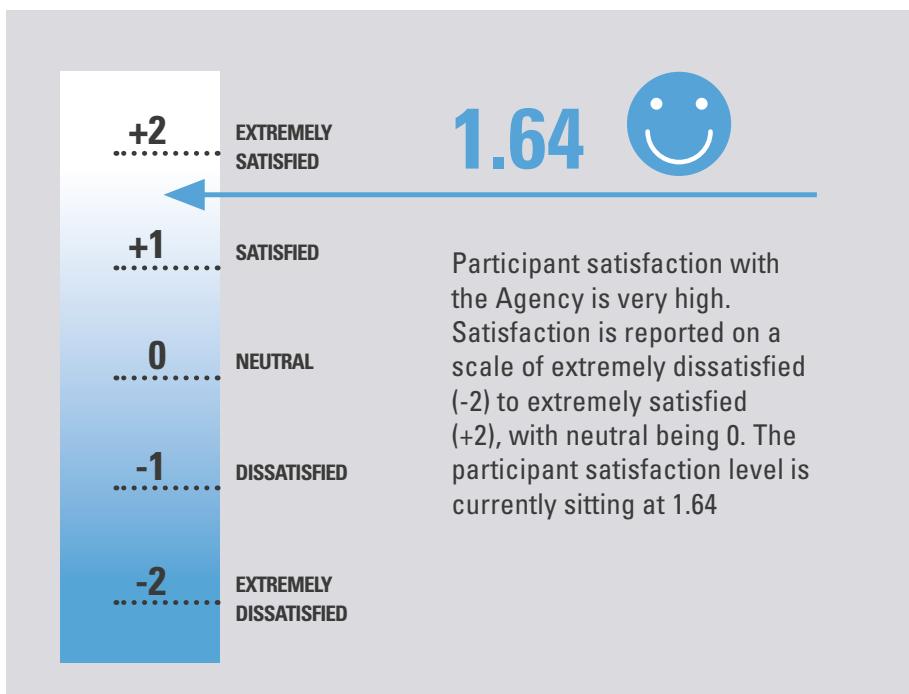
We are making good progress towards building a modern, technological scheme – but there is still work to do.

Participants are able to get better choices and more control through the smart use of technology. We are looking at using dynamic online environments – including phone apps and other technology platforms – to allow participants to interact with relevant communities of interest, share their experiences, purchase competitively priced supports and access their own plans and data. We are working to make this happen.

We are also focusing on communicating with people in the way that they want. People with disability are often early adopters of new and innovative technology, and we need to deliver our communications accordingly. We have a strong social media presence: we use webinars, live chats and provide online newsletters. We are now looking into other innovative ways of sharing our services – for example, video blogs. This is an essential part of our commitment to the value of empowerment, we want to enable choice and control for our participants. This is about listening to what people want, and how they want it shared, and building the Agency based on this feedback.



## Participant Satisfaction



## Strategic Progress Report – Year Two

This Progress Report provides our year two update on progress towards building a world leading National Disability Insurance Scheme.

The National Disability Insurance Agency produced our first Progress Report in 2014 and committed to delivering yearly progress updates as we move towards full scheme. The Progress Report is intended to complement our Annual Report which is tabled in Parliament in September of each year.

This second Progress Report focuses on what we have achieved in the last 12 months and benchmarks how we are tracking against the goals and outcomes identified in the Agency's Strategic Plan 2013-2016.

The Strategic Plan sets out the Agency's values, goals and what we expect to achieve over the trial period of the Scheme – from 2013 to 2016.

We are pleased to report that the Scheme is continuing to deliver for people with disability:

- 16,649 participants have been found eligible for the Scheme, with 13,610 having an approved plan by the end of March 2015.
- As at 31 March 2015, \$754 million of support has been committed to participants with approved plans. Full scheme costs are still expected to be within the funding envelope.
- Participants have largely been very satisfied by our services, with a satisfaction rating of 1.64 on a scale

of -2 (extremely unsatisfied) to +2 (extremely satisfied).

- The NDIS has now been operating for 12 months in trial sites across the whole of ACT, the Barkly region (NT) and Perth Hills (WA). These sites are in addition to our four two-year old sites in the Hunter (NSW), Barwon (VIC), South Australia (for children under 14 years of age) and in Tasmania (for young people, aged 15 to 24 years).
- The scheme will commence in the Nepean Blue Mountains area of NSW from 1 July 2015 for children and young people aged 17 years and under.
- We have recruited over 700 staff – of which over 15 per cent identify as having a disability. This compares with an Australian Public Service average of 3 per cent. Around 50 per cent of our staff identify as having significant experience with disability. Significant experience with disability refers to people who have a family member with disability, are a carer for a person with disability, or have more than three years' experience working with people with disability.

We know there is still a significant amount of work ahead. There are a number of areas where we need to improve and we are working hard to prioritise and implement these improvements as we go about pursuing our strategic goals. This is particularly important as we scale up towards full scheme.

## Janet's Story...

Janet Abraham is a participant of the Hunter trial site and has motor neuron disease.

Janet's story shows how the NDIS can transform the lives of people with disability as well as their families.

She is the first NDIS participant in Australia to receive the NeuroSwitch to help her communicate.

"I am free, I can communicate with everybody," Janet expressed through the NeuroSwitch device.

Janet is now able to send text messages, communicate with Skype, send emails and go on the internet through the NeuroSwitch.

The NDIS has funded the NeuroSwitch technology, as well as installation, coding and training for Janet to use the technology and a year of technical support.

The communication equipment measures and records the electric voltage sent by a person's brain to their muscles, allowing Janet to communicate through a computer.

Her husband Joseph Abraham said he believes this piece of technology is radically changing Janet's way of life. "Since being able to communicate again, the smile hasn't left her face. It's like she has been released, after being trapped in her body," Joseph said.

Joseph has told us that the communication device will improve her

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Since being able to communicate again, the smile hasn't left her face. It's like she has been released, after being trapped in her body.

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quality of life especially when expressing her needs to doctors and hospital staff, particularly when she is in pain.

"She's enjoying sending text messages and being able to do anything anyone else can do with the computer, plus talk, call and eventually she'll be able to drive her chair – she's become free again," he said. The NDIS has also provided supports like car modification, personal care, a wheelchair, contribution for taxi fares and a platform lift.

"The NDIS funded a pressure relieving mattress for Janet, and this has significantly improved her sleep ... she used to wake up because she was in so much pain," he said.

Joseph has explained to us that without the support of the NDIS, the way Janet's life has improved with the NeuroSwitch would not have been imaginable.



# Strategic Goal

To empower people with disability to ensure they are in control and have choices. This is based on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

**OUTCOME 1:** Build the capacity of people with disability to exercise choice and control in the pursuit of their goals.

**OUTCOME 2:** Promote the independence and social and economic participation of all people with disability, especially those who are vulnerable or marginalised.

**OUTCOME 3:** Recognise, nurture and uphold informal support and care arrangements, especially for children and vulnerable adults.

## What have we learned?

We know that people with disability must be at the centre of the NDIS. This is a central principle of the design of the scheme. It will continue to be a core focus as we roll out the full scheme.

It is essential that participants have choice and control in order to achieve social and economic independence and participation. We need to have the right processes in place to support people who are unable or unlikely to reach out to get the services they need.

We know that families, carers and informal supports are critical to the success of the scheme and that we need to support them through building capacity, independence and participation, as well as planned breaks.

Our progress has been encouraging. We are on track.

- After two years, we are seeing more and more examples of the scheme enabling people to be independent and to participate in their communities, including accessing training and jobs.
- We have been working closely with carers and families to understand their needs, aspirations and ideas and using this feedback to refine our policies and processes.
- We are hearing a groundswell of positive stories from participants across the trial sites. People are making informed choices and working with planners and family to identify their goals and aspirations and put in place the supports they need to achieve these.

There are also a lot of areas where we need to do more work. We have listened to the experiences of our participants, families, carers, providers, advocates, peak

bodies and others. We've also heard from the Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS and an independent Citizens' Jury. From this feedback we've heard:

- We still have more work to do to make sure we provide the right level of support to people from different backgrounds and with different experiences and needs, especially for people who are unlikely to reach out for support or who have been in the old disability system for a long time.
- We need to communicate more clearly and through different formats
  - for example, sharing information through videos and pictures. Our communications products need to be simple, accessible and provide clear and consistent information about processes and policies. We need to accommodate different learning styles and make sure we are sharing new information about changes as soon as they happen. The best way of doing this, from the feedback we've received, is to work directly with the people we are communicating with to make sure we get the design of our products right.
- We need strategies in place to make sure we deliver for people living in different places and from different background, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- We need to make sure people understand the roles of our different staff – including Planners, Support Coordinators and Local Area Coordinators.
- We need to make sure that people with intellectual disability are a central part of the scheme's design and governance.
- We need strong links with mainstream services such as health and education to make sure people can get the training and support they need to maximise their social and economic participation and independence.



These are some of the key themes we've heard over the last year which relate to our first strategic goal of ensuring participants are in control and are empowered to make choices. Some of these concerns have already been addressed, some of them are being addressed and the others will be priorities for us over the next 12 months.

## What are we doing?

The Agency has implemented a number of changes in response to the lessons we have learned so far.

Here are some of the key changes we have made in the last 12 months:

- We have developed a new Service Charter which sets out the standard of service that our participants can expect to receive and which states our commitment to providing a high standard of service. This charter was developed in collaboration with Inclusion Australia who are a peak body on intellectual disability in Australia and with guidance from the Australian Network on Disability and the NDIA Independent Advisory Council. The service charter is presented in a clear and easy to read way – thanks to the feedback of these groups. The Service Charter demonstrates our commitment to putting the needs, goals and aspirations of people with disability at the centre of what we do. We aspire to be connected to both people with disability and the broader community through a sense of belonging, social wellbeing, and provision of world leading customer service. We will regularly monitor and review the implementation of the Service Charter to make sure we are delivering what we set out to achieve.
- We are taking a continuous improvement approach to planning. This includes regular reviews of our Operational Guidelines and the planning processes. Some of the improvements we have implemented as a result of this approach include:
  - More advice for planners about

informal and community-based supports which people can access before considering funded supports.

- Improved guidance for planners on the role of mainstream services, such as education and health.
- We have asked experts to work with us on refining some of our Operational Guidelines, including autism, early intervention and hearing and sensory services.
- We have implemented an organisational competency framework to ensure that planners and staff clearly understand their roles and responsibilities. We are making sure this information is shared with our participants.
- We have finalised significant changes to our internal Quality Assurance Framework. This includes new training modules and improved supporting documentation for planners with a focus on consistency and quality.
- We are looking into processes to develop and approve plans for longer than 12 months (which is the current practice). This will focus on identifying circumstances in which it will give participants more choice and control to have a plan in place for an extended duration.
- We have implemented a safeguarding assessment in some trial sites to make sure we have the right supports in place from the very beginning for participants who need additional support and advice for a variety of reasons.

- Our scheme Actuary has been helping us to develop reference packages which will make sure that planners consider likely core supports for participants with similar characteristics.

- We have appointed an eminent advisor to work with us on issues of mental health and local area coordination. Eddie Bartnik is the former Mental Health Commissioner in Western Australia. He is Australia's foremost expert on local area coordination. Eddie has been leading projects on local area coordination and psychosocial disability, including undertaking extensive engagement with the sector.
- We have set up an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander working group and a rural and remote working group. We are in the process of setting up a culturally and linguistically diverse working group.

These groups will provide us with invaluable advice about how to best deliver services to people in diverse circumstances. We are committed to working closely with subject matter experts to ensure that we effectively deliver the scheme to people no matter who they are or where they live.

- The Independent Advisory Council on the NDIS has formed an Intellectual Disability Reference Group, bringing together people with intellectual disability, academics and leaders in specialist organisations to provide advice on inclusion of people with intellectual disability in the Scheme.
- We are working with various organisations to ensure that young people with disability who are at risk of entering or are referred to nursing homes for accommodation and support are identified and referred to the Agency

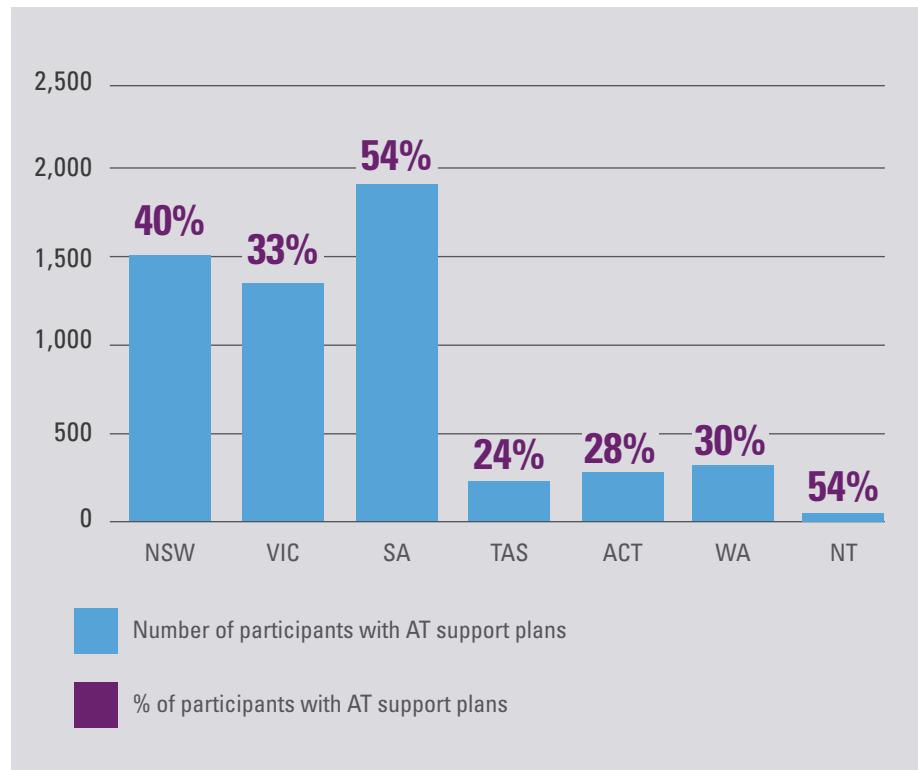
for appropriate support and services.

- We know that a nationally consistent approach to quality and safeguards is essential for the safety and wellbeing of our participants. We are working with governments to transition to a nationally consistent and risk-based approach to quality assurance and safeguards.
- Social and economic participation for people with disability is a key objective of the scheme. We have developed a high level strategy to begin to address the broad range of barriers for scheme participants to become more economically independent through employment. We are working with the Independent Advisory Council and jurisdictions on the further development and implementation of the strategy.

More broadly, we have adopted co-design principles to ensure our work is done with participant input and engagement. The Independent Advisory Council is a key resource for the Agency on this important issue. The Agency will continue to use the knowledge, expertise and lived experience of the Independent Advisory Council members for ideas and responses to operational and policy options.

## Assistive Technology

Number and % of participants with Assistive Technology supports in plans as at 30 April 2015



# Strategic Goal

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is financially sustainable and governed using insurance principles.

**OUTCOME 1:** Base governance and operations on strong insurance principles, using comprehensive and reliable data.

**OUTCOME 2:** Invest, including early intervention in a lifetime approach.

**OUTCOME 3:** Drive support services and workforce to be high quality, effective, efficient and responsive to the diversity of NDIS participants, so as to create a new dynamic and noninflationary market for disability supports.

## What have we learned?

The Agency is committed to ensuring the financial sustainability of the scheme through a robust insurance principles approach. The development of a strong insurance capability across the Agency is vital for driving the focus on outcomes for people with disability and to the long-term success of the scheme.

We know that the insurance framework approach is central to the sustainability of the NDIS, and is crucial for driving efficiency and effectiveness. The insurance approach enables lifetime support for participants. This is fundamental to the operation of the scheme.

We are growing our evidence base to ensure we make decisions using rigorous actuarial advice, including growing our understanding of early intervention best practice. We know that early intervention supports are an important investment in reducing or preventing escalation of the

long term support needs of a participant, and that early intervention is not just during early childhood.

Growing the disability support market is a key challenge for the sustainability of the scheme going forward. Participants must be the core focus of the NDIS marketplace. People's needs and desires must shape the types of services that are being offered by the market. However, in order to effectively drive this outcome, participants need to be well-informed consumers. Experience to date in the trial sites has demonstrated that we need to do more to build the capacity of participants so that they can exercise maximum choice and control. We also know that approaches will need to be tailored to meet the particular needs of different locations – with a focus on delivery in rural and remote Australia.

We also understand that the performance of the future disability support market

will have a major effect on the lives of participants and also on Scheme costs. The NDIS represents a significant structural change for the disability support market. The transition to a competitive market means that the disability support sector faces major changes – including in the design and delivery of supports, and responding to consumer choice. We now have a dedicated market team in place. They are working closely with the sector to ensure they are ready and able to make the most of the opportunities offered by the scheme. There is still significant work to do – both in the short and longer term on this issue – but we are on track.

As we've said throughout this report, the smart use of technology will be essential to the success of the scheme. We know we need to work to develop a deeper understanding of how technology can make a difference to how people with disability interact with and use their supports. We are also considering how new and alternative technology platforms can assist providers to operate efficiently, market their supports and showcase the potential of technological solutions to give individuals greater independence through aids and other equipment.

These are some of the key themes we've heard relating to our second strategic goal around sustainability, markets and insurance. Some of them have already been addressed, some of them are being addressed and the others will be priorities for us over the next 6 to 12 months.

## What are we doing?

The Agency, supported by our Scheme Actuary, is focused on ensuring the financial sustainability of the NDIS. Central to this is making sure all our decisions are underpinned by a robust insurance approach. We have an independent Scheme Actuary supported by an actuarial team to guide the development of our insurance-based model. They will provide an ongoing assessment of the Scheme's liabilities.

The Scheme Actuary is continually assessing the financial sustainability of the Scheme and providing information on Scheme performance from which decisions can be made to ensure ongoing financial sustainability. This includes a quarterly monitoring report which provides important public updates on expenditure and the funding envelope, risk, scheme experience from participants' point of view, and actual scheme experience compared with expected.

The actuarial team has been working to embed a stronger understanding of the insurance approach across the Agency. Introductory training on insurance principles, and more detailed training on data collection, reference packages and a participant outcomes framework has been developed and is being rolled out across the organisation. This training also describes the actuarial methodology for monitoring scheme financial sustainability as outlined in the annual financial sustainability report. An Insurance Principles Manual is being developed which will provide an important resource in embedding an understanding of the insurance approach. This manual will be turned into an eLearning module and online presentation for staff.

## What are we doing? (cont...)

One of the more exciting changes to the NDIS in the last 12 months is the development of an outcomes framework to measure over time the benefits of the NDIS for participants and their families. We have identified outcomes across eight domains.

- exercising choice and control
- daily activities
- relationships
- home
- health and wellbeing
- lifelong learning
- work
- social, community and civic participation

The outcomes framework will allow us to monitor scheme progress and benchmark internationally against other OECD countries. The outcomes framework will assist us in understanding what types of supports lead to good outcomes, to identify barriers to achievement of goals, and to share this information with other participants and providers.

We know that a robust disability services market - focused on both supply and demand - is essential for the ongoing success of the scheme. We have started to make inroads in the development of a disability services market and supporting workforce.

Our vision for the 'end state' of the market is a vibrant, competitive and softly regulated market with sufficient levels of supply to meet participant demand. This market would comprise of many interdependent and interconnected submarkets. The role of the Agency will be facilitating demand and supply, encouraging greater efficiency, having a

strong focus on monitoring participant outcomes, and observing the qualities of the market. In the short-term, we are focused on managing short-term risks to supply, and considering what interventions are required to mitigate those risks and avoid market failure. This includes activities such as a pricing analysis, and the finalisation of a Market Architecture Framework which will include a preliminary assessment of supply and demand gaps in differing segments of the market, and the identification of appropriate market interventions.

To enable this market to grow, we know that participants need to be well informed, capable, ambitious and demanding consumers who have access to responsive mainstream and specialist providers that deliver innovative and competitive supports and services. Participants must also be able to 'vote with their feet'. We know that it will take time for many people with disability and their families to build the knowledge and skills that are required to become active consumers.

We are focused on the need to foster the demand side of the market while developing the long-term vision of the market. This work is being undertaken alongside a number of other capacity building projects, including the Disability Support Organisation project and embedding capacity building into the design of participant pathways for full Scheme.

While the NDIS is a national scheme, we recognise that each trial site is unique and understand the need to modify our approach to service delivery to ensure positive outcomes are delivered across the whole country. This is particularly relevant

in remote Indigenous communities.

We are taking an innovative approach to service delivery in our Barkly and South Australian trial sites and reaching out to a range of partners who have local expertise and experience.

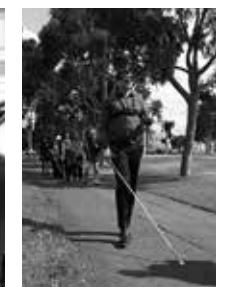
Through the Sector Development Fund, we have funded 18 community organisations around the country to work with people with disability and their families and carers to make the most of the opportunities presented by the NDIS and engage effectively with the Scheme. The Sector Development Fund was transferred to the Department of Social Services in late 2014. We are continuing to work collaboratively to identify projects and sectors best suited for funding.

Another exciting initiative which will be part of our new ICT system is the development of an e-Market. This is an online trading platform of goods, services, ideas and opinions. An e-Market has the potential to dramatically change the environment in which both participants and providers engage with the market.

We are currently developing an Assistive Technology Strategy. The strategy is important in relation to the development of a strong market. The term assistive technology applies to any equipment used to support people with disability -

and could span from a walking cane to an iPad. We recognise that there have been some delays in the provision of this equipment which is included in many participants' plans. We are taking action on this and continuing to work with jurisdictions on equipment issues. While immediate action has been taken to remedy delays, the assistive technology strategy takes a long term view. Our strategic priorities for assistive technology are to 1) support and stimulate innovation, 2) maximise participant choice and control; and 3) ensure sustainability and value. In the longer term, we are also looking to establish an innovation hub to stimulate research and design in assistive technology.

We are investing in early intervention, with a particular focus on young children. We have listened to feedback identifying issues around early intervention and autism. We have responded by engaging expert researchers and practitioners from universities around Australia to review and update the evidence on best practice. This will help us develop guidelines for our planners, and give advice to families and early childhood service providers. The aim of the project is to summarise current research and available evidence and best practice in the management of Autism for young children and how this can be applied in planning and decision making in the NDIS.





## Cheryl's Story...

### Cheryl is experiencing a whole new world.

Now a National Disability Insurance Scheme participant in Western Australia, Cheryl Hilson is experiencing a whole new world and she's loving it.

Cheryl, who has cerebral palsy and low vision, can now purchase her own supports and she has done that through Cam Can – a local provider, assisting people with disability in planning, implementing and maintaining community based supports and services.

"Being able to go and meet Marc and Anthea first, at Cam Can, then receive support through their agency really opened doors for me," Cheryl said.

"When I first spoke with Anthea she said to me you're the one in the driver's seat, so you to tell us what you want us to do, so I did.

"Now my days are full of activity and spontaneity," Cheryl said.

While some of her support is for personal care and meal preparation, at other times Cheryl gets to do whatever she wants.

"Will I go out for a coffee? Take the dog for a walk or to the groomers? Visit my family? Attend a writing workshop? Now I have options. It's so empowering to be able to exercise choice and control over the supports that best suit my needs.

"Now I even get to meet people before they start providing my supports, and I'm encouraged to build relationships with them. I've never experienced this with previous support providers, and it seemed to me carers were told to keep their distance!

"Now I feel much more positive. I'm even more active when I'm alone and currently I'm writing my memoirs – I dictate my thoughts onto my iPad, using Siri – a voice recognition program, then I email it to one of my carers for printing.

"I'm also putting the laundry in the washing machine and turning it on; I set up my clean clothes for the next day and I book my own taxis. Sometimes these tasks take me a long time but they're all things I used to leave to someone else. Now I "want" to do them for myself," Cheryl said. "I'm very happy being a part of the NDIS trial. My plan has just been completed; I have choice and control over my supports, and for the first time I'll be able to live a life I've only ever dreamt about.

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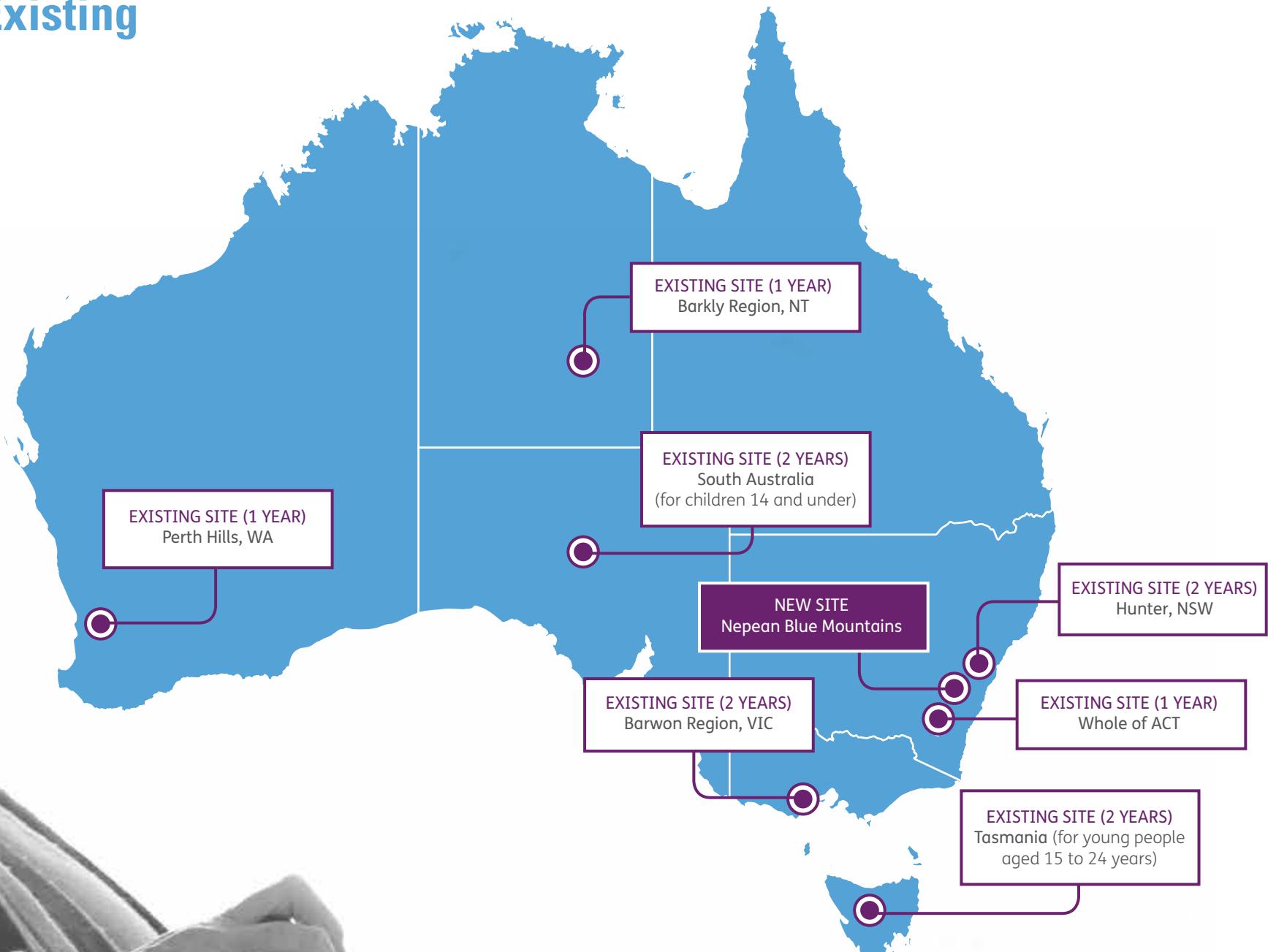
**Now I feel much more positive.  
I'm even more active when I'm  
alone and currently I'm writing  
my memoirs...**

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The NDIS is helping people with disability live more fulfilling and prosperous lives – including through the use of innovation and technology in people's support packages.

The insurance model means we can invest in people with disabilities to secure long-term benefits for them, their families, and their communities while building a sustainable scheme to last for future generations.

# New and Existing Trial Sites



# Strategic Goal

The community has ownership, confidence and pride in the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the National Disability Insurance Agency.

**OUTCOME 1:** Respect and actively seek the views of people with disability, their families, carers and the community.

**OUTCOME 2:** Work constructively with governments.

**OUTCOME 3:** Raise community awareness and knowledge of how to support people with disability.

## What have we learned?

The Agency is committed to delivering a scheme in which the community has ownership, confidence and pride. We know that we need to continue to share what we are learning and doing with the broader Australian community to maintain momentum and support for the Scheme – particularly as we move to a national presence over the coming years.

We know that we need to work with our stakeholders to create communities which welcome people with disability and ensure they can access supports from mainstream services. This means we need to work closely with governments and providers responsible for services such as health, education, justice and transport to make sure they are delivering for people with disability, alongside the support provided by the NDIS. We need to make sure we have seamless interfaces in place between the different systems.

We also know that while there have been some inroads in the way we communicate

about the scheme, there is still work to do. Our online presence needs to be much stronger. It must be simple, clear and easy to navigate. We need to use technology to tell our stories and communicate with people in the ways that they want. We need to share the stories of our participants so that people understand the scheme and its goals in a practical and outcome focused way.

We have heard that our feedback mechanisms can still improve. By improving how we collect feedback from our participants, their families, carers and the community about their experiences, concerns and questions, we can make the scheme work better for all those who are part of it, and those who will be part of it.

We know that the process of co-design is important to creating an NDIS that has people with disability at its centre. We need to remain focused on co-creation and co-delivery going forward. This is particularly important to make sure

we build a scheme for all Australians – including for people from diverse backgrounds such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Finally, we know we need good people delivering the scheme if we want it to work. We have been working hard to create a strong values based culture in the Agency to ensure we deliver the right kind of services in the right way.

These are some of the key themes we've heard over the last year relating to community ownership and confidence in the Scheme. Some of them have already been addressed, some of them are being addressed and the others will be priorities for us over the next 6 to 12 months.



## What are we doing?

Over the coming months and years we will continue to focus on strengthening the Agency's staff and culture to deliver the scheme successfully and to ensure that our processes are efficient, transparent and can grow and adapt as the full scheme is rolled-out across Australia.

We have developed a workforce planning strategy to map the number and capabilities of staff required for not only a successful transition to full scheme but also for the ongoing operational requirements after full scheme has been reached.

A key area of focus going forward is building our leadership capability. The Agency has recently had our senior executive business case approved – which means a number of new senior managers will be joining us over the next few years. Making sure we have the right leadership capability will be essential for the delivery of the full scheme, for the development of a strong workforce within the Agency, and to grow and nurture professional relationships with all stakeholders, both internal and external.

Our growth as an organisation is underpinned by our commitment to fiscal sustainability and responsibility. We are working towards the objective that at full scheme at least 93 per cent of the NDIA's expenditure will be directly related to support for individuals. This means that 93 per cent of the scheme's spending will be controlled by participants themselves. The remaining 7 per cent refers to the Agency's operating budget - 7 per cent administration costs represents world's best practice.

We have a responsibility to report to stakeholder governments on progress. We also have a responsibility to inform

and engage with participants, potential participants, their families and carers, and the wider community about our performance and plans for the future – hence the development of this report and other key documents like our Annual Report and quarterly monitoring reports.

The Agency is being innovative in its online and digital communications and is achieving a high level of engagement and feedback. Many people in the disability community are regular users of online and social media, which provides a valuable opportunity for the Agency to interact directly with some of our key stakeholders. To support this, we have developed a strategic communication plan which spells out our communications goals and plans to deliver on these. Our webinars are continuing to be watched by a large number of people, and we will continue these – along with thinking about new and improved ways of communicating with people. We have started regular internal video messages for staff and are considering ways to extend this to the broader community.

Developing an exemplary website is a key priority for us going forward. A new, best practice website tailored to the needs of participants and the sector is currently under development and is expected to be launched in 2016.

We have a number of processes in place to improve the way we communicate and listen to the views of our stakeholders.

These include:

- the development of a Participation and Feedback Strategy through our National Quality Action plan which is now available on our website,

- a regular program of trial site visits by the CEO and Deputy CEO to talk to participants, providers and staff about their views and ideas;
- funding for People with Disability Australia to undertake an independent Citizens' Jury to look at how the Agency is tracking against its stated objectives; and,
- undertaking a Culture Mapping Project to establish a baseline for ongoing assessment of how well we are implementing the NDIS consistent with our values – this includes seeking the views of staff and stakeholders about the organisation's culture, values and performance.

We have heard that we need to work more closely with mainstream services such as health, education and transport services to ensure access to and continuity of support for participants. In response, in each trial site we have developed relationships with local mainstream services to build collaborative approaches - including protocols for working together - to make sure that mainstream services deliver for people. An example of where this is working well is in Tasmania where we are working with other governments to develop and test an integrated approach to the transition from school into Disability Employment Services or other employment supports. The lessons learned from this project will help consolidate the planning processes between state and Commonwealth departments of education and employment support. This will drive collaboration between providers, eliminate duplication and strengthen economic participation outcomes for participants. The NDIS also sits within a broader commitment by governments to advance the interests of people with disability, their families and carers across Australia as outlined in the National Disability Strategy.

Co-design has been essential in the development of the Scheme from the outset. Co-design is an approach that brings those affected by the NDIS into the design process to help find the right balance between what we want to achieve and what can be delivered. We know that for co-design to be effective, we must continue to seek the views of people with disability and the broader public in how we govern, design and implement our systems and processes. We are undertaking work to further refine and develop our co-design approach in preparation for full Scheme. This includes making sure that people with disability, particularly people with intellectual disability and people from diverse backgrounds, are part of the decision-making process.

The NDIS Independent Advisory Council plays an important role acting as a conduit between participants, the community, and the decision-making bodies of the Agency. The IAC informs decision-making in relation to the design and implementation of the NDIS in a number of ways, including providing formal advice to the Agency on topics such as the concept of reasonable and necessary supports, mental health and intellectual disability.

Advisory Council members visit trial sites and hold roundtable meetings with participants, carers, community and user-led organisations, advocates and specialist and mainstream service providers. These roundtables provide the opportunity for the Advisory Council to talk with organisations and individuals in trial sites about experiences and concerns. Advisory Council members also engage with stakeholders and sector representatives in their communities and report back at their bi-monthly meetings to inform the Council of the pivotal issues. This feedback is used by Agency management in prioritising work going forward.

## Harry's Story...

Tasmanian NDIS participant Harry Bolch wants to enjoy a more fulfilling social life.

Now, thanks to the NDIS, assistive technology and a persistent speech pathologist, his goal is more attainable.

Harry, 16, has severe Athetoid cerebral palsy, which mum Kelly said means his body makes involuntary movements; he is non-verbal; Percutaneous Endoscopic Gastrostomy (PEG) fed and he is quadriplegic.

"He can't control his body at all," Kelly added. "But he's bright and he communicates through a mixture of technologies, including his eye-gaze computer."

Eye-gaze technology allows people with severe physical disabilities to use a computer.

These high-tech devices have built-in cameras which track the users eyes and where they are looking, allowing them to move the mouse pointer around, and they 'click' by blinking; using a switch or staring at the screen for a certain period of time.

"Harry has had his eye-gaze computer for a year now," Kelly said. "To begin with it was quite challenging to get it set up to a point where all the timing and screens were right for him to navigate through without getting frustrated or giving up!"

"But thanks to his persistent speech pathologist, it's now up and running well and recently we've had a bit of a breakthrough," Kelly said.

"I wouldn't say you can have a full on

**...He'll go to the family page and say "Hello mum", which is beautiful. It's not like he's writing essays but it's been great and it's a start!**

conversation with Harry just yet but you can say "Is there something you want?" and he will navigate through his computer and say, "Can I have a drink?", or he'll go to the family page and say "Hello mum", which is beautiful. It's not like he's writing essays but it's been great and it's a start!"

Harry became an NDIS participant in March 2014.

"The NDIS has definitely improved our lives – Harry's and ours as a family," she said.

"We've been able to get funding to purchase Harry a manual wheelchair. We took ownership two weeks ago and now he can access places he could never in his electric wheelchair, so he now has more flexibility.

"Recently he was able to go to the beach with his classmates and that's something he would never have been able to do before in his big heavy electric wheelchair," Kelly said.

"Also, we've never been able to take Harry's electric wheelchair on flights, and living here in Tasmania it's restricted us from travelling but now, with his new manual chair, there's no issue. Now he can get on a plane and we can all go on family holidays."

Kelly said the NDIS has also given her family financial security.

"Prior to Harry becoming an NDIS participant, life was pretty stressful," she said.

"Every school holiday break, year after year, I'd have to apply to the State Government and hold my breath to see if they had any available funding so we could get a carer for Harry so I could continue to work my two-day-a-week job for the 13 weeks over the school holiday period!

"There was never enough funding to go around so I always ended up using all of my annual leave, and then I'd have to take leave without pay. Thankfully, I worked for an understanding employer who always agreed to it!

"My husband, Jason, also had to use up

all of his annual leave so it's been quite a while since we've been able to take leave together. We have always taken it in turn. It's been such a relief to not have this stress in our lives and know Harry is happy and cared for."

Kelly said recently the family has started exploring social options for Harry, which is something they could never contemplate prior to the NDIS, through a lack of funding.

"It was hard enough just scraping by with my work and financial commitments," Kelly said.

"Although Harry's life will never be that of a regular teenager, the funding we've obtained will help him to socialise as a teenager and live his life to the fullest and best of his ability... and I can tell he's quite excited about being able to plan outings, independently, without his mum and dad!"



# Citizens' Jury on the NDIS



The NDIA funded an independent Citizens' Jury, held in Sydney from 17 to 20 February 2015. The event was organised by People With Disability Australia and the newDemocracy Foundation, with support from the Agency.

The aim of the Citizens' Jury was to hear from ordinary Australians to deliver a verdict on the progress of the NDIS and provide suggestions for improvements. The Jury released a report card in May 2015 at the NDIA National Office in Geelong during a live streamed launch event. The report card includes recommendations from the jury, based on the evidence they heard from participants, witnesses and the NDIA over the four sitting days.

A Citizens' Jury is a mechanism of participatory action research that draws on the symbolism, and some of the practices, of a legal trial by Jury. It targets ordinary people and encourages them to have a say on important issues.

The identification of jurors, participants and participant witnesses was undertaken by newDemocracy, which is an independent research organisation. To make sure the experiences of people with an intellectual disability were included in the process, participant witnesses also met with people with an intellectual disability in a peer-support environment.

Deputy CEO Louise Glanville said the Citizens' Jury provided a great opportunity to hear from our participants who are the real experts on the NDIS.

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**It is heartening that the jury found the Scheme is supporting quality of life outcomes for people with disability**

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"It is important to have feedback from Parliamentary committees and technical experts ... but even more important to actually think about the real experts ... people who are participants in this scheme, to really get a sense of how people are finding the work we are doing."

Ms Glanville said information from the Citizens' Jury report will help the NDIA to know if we are on the right track.

We thank the jurors and witnesses for their commitment to improving the NDIS.

"It is heartening that the jury found the Scheme is supporting quality of life outcomes for people with disability," Ms Glanville said.

Ms Glanville said the Agency knows how important it is for people with disability to live an ordinary life and to achieve their goals and aspirations.

The Citizens' Jury is available on the PWDA website: <http://www.pwd.org.au/admin/ndis-citizens-jury-scorecard-project.html>

The Agency's response is available on the NDIS website: <http://www.ndis.gov.au/agency-response-citizens-jury-report>



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