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Welcome to the first CEO sector update for 2019.

I am pleased to start the year with some good news: During January we hit an important milestone of [250,000 participants now benefitting from the NDIS](#). This means a quarter of a million people are receiving supports and services they need to achieve their goals, including more than 78,000 people who are receiving support for the first time.

At the start of 2019 the NDIS rolled out to all remaining groups of people across Victoria, Tasmania and Queensland on 1 January 2019. This means the Scheme is now available to all eligible Australians in all states and territories except Western Australia, who will progressively join the Scheme in 2020.

We have a big year ahead of us as we continue to build the right foundations to get ready for full Scheme.

COAG Disability Reform Council Quarterly Report – 31 December 2018

The [COAG Disability Reform Council Quarterly Report](#) was released this month. This Quarterly Report is the biggest in the Agency's history. As participants spend more time in the Scheme and the Agency evolves and grows, we have an increasing amount and quality of data available to us. We now have greater insights into the NDIS than ever before.

Some key highlights show that as of 31 December 2018:

- 11,489 children are receiving support through the NDIS Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) program. Last year the NDIA National Access Team ensured all children were matched with Early Childhood Partners by the end of 2018.
- The Scheme is broadening in reach, with a 20 per cent increase in the quarter in people who identify as culturally and linguistically diverse.
- The number of unscheduled plan reviews reduced as the Agency worked hard to progress through an existing volume as well as new requests. 13.4 per cent of participants requested unscheduled plan reviews during the quarter compared to 14.6 per cent in the

previous quarter, and 18.1 per cent in all previous quarters combined.

- Participants are also having a much better service experience with the NDIS Contact Centre. Average answer speeds dropped down to 28 seconds from 4 minutes and 16 seconds, and email resolution for first response rose from 70 to 80 per cent.
- The provider market continues to grow with a six per cent growth on previous quarter to a total of 19,075 providers across Australia.
- As participants spend more time in the Scheme, they are also using their supports to get more involved in their communities and social activities.

Each time the Agency releases a quarterly report, it is an opportunity to take stock and appreciate the sheer volume of work done by our staff, partners and the sector more broadly to help realise this progress.

What are we working on in 2019?

The NDIA Executive Team has spent time this year working through our priorities for 2019, aligned with our [Corporate Plan 2018-2022](#). I would like to take this opportunity to highlight some of the areas we are focused on improving throughout this year—our biggest year of roll out ever.

We continue to focus on the implementation of the pathways program, including progressive roll out of training to make sure we deliver improved support to planning staff. We are making sure the NDIS is inclusive and delivers for people regardless of their disability, background or where they live. We recognise a single pathway approach is not suitable for all people with disability. That's why we've developed tailored pathway improvements for people with disability who have specific disability, cultural and/or communication needs. You can read more about the specific improvements we are introducing on the [NDIS pathway reform page](#).

We focusing on making sure the way we communicate is inclusive, and that our products and communications materials are accessible and available in a variety of languages and formats. [Our new website](#) has been designed with accessibility at its core and was tested by a number of people with a range of different disabilities. It is a good start in sharing information about the NDIS in a clear and accessible way, but we recognise we have more work to do in this space, and will be focused on this during 2019.

Back in December we announced some [improvements to the Assistive Technology process](#). We have heard from many of you that the experience with Assistive Technology (AT) could be improved. We have already made some progress by reducing the number of quotes people need on simple AT items, and making the process to replace AT more simple and streamlined. We are also aiming to improve the process for people requiring more complex AT.

Another key area of focus for 2019 will be making sure that we are sharing information with the sector to enable market growth and promote a deeper understanding of the NDIS. I am pleased to announce the NDIA will host a series of Insights and Outcomes Forums throughout 2019, to share with the sector some of the key longitudinal information we are starting to learn as participants spend more time in the Scheme and as our knowledge base grows. Stay tuned for information on dates for these events over the coming months.

And finally, we know we have more to do to make sure participants are getting the employment supports they need to find and maintain a job. In December last year, the Government announced an NDIS Participant Employment Taskforce. Their focus is on working with the sector to build the capacity of people with disability to participate in work, and support employers to create opportunities for people with disability. On 21 February 2019, the Agency held the ['Let's talk about work' webinar](#), which will be available to view online in the next few weeks. Supporting participants to find their own unique pathway into employment will remain an area of focus for the Agency over the coming year.

While there are a number of other priorities we are balancing during the next 12 months, I hope this gives you a sense of where the Agency is heading in 2019.

Recent news

It has been a productive year already, so in case you missed anything in our regular newsletters or on the website please take the time to review some recent announcements from January and February.

- The NDIA has released a new [Information Linkages and Capacity Building \(ILC\) grant round](#) to boost economic participation for people with disability.
- The government has released the KPMG Report into the Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) Framework Review and the government response to the Review, following consideration by the Disability Reform Council in December 2018. In support of the release, the NDIA has announced the establishment of an SDA reference group. We are calling for expressions of interest for membership in the reference group. You can find more details about the [SDA improvements](#). The NDIA has also published the 2018/19 Price Guide, adjusting prices for inflation by CPI.
- Important timeframes for transition to National Quality and Safeguard Commission for [Victoria, Tasmania and ACT](#); and the [Northern Territory](#).
- Late last year, the Agency announced a series of enhancements to pricing arrangements. The enhancements included improved arrangements for more complex support provision, review of therapy pricing services and a Western Australian Market Review. The [WA Market Review is now open for feedback](#).

Upcoming events

- With the 2019 Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras fast approaching, we've teamed up with four disability organisations - Cerebral Palsy Alliance, Women with Disability Australia, Northcott and People with Disabilities Australia (PWDA), who share a common goal of raising awareness of the right to inclusion and sexual expression for people with disability. Our joint float, the 'Fearless Express', aims to raise awareness about the lack of accessible public transport for people with disability. Keep an eye on our social media channels to follow our progress ahead of the March 2 parade in Sydney.
- I'm looking forward to speaking at the [Get Building SDA National Conference \(external\)](#) on 22 March 2019 to discuss where we are heading with Specialist Disability Accommodation, and at the NDS Leaders Breakfast 2019 about opportunities for providers in 2019.

I look forward to the Scheme's biggest year of rollout to date and thank you for your ongoing support as we work together to deliver the NDIS for people with disability, their families and carers.

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