30 March 2019

As Minister and Assistant Minister for Social Services, one of the most enjoyable parts of our role is speaking to the many participants, families, carers and their supporters all over Australia. Hearing about how the NDIS is helping people with disability to live better lives reinforces our resolve to further improve the NDIS for all Australians.

In January this year, the NDIS hit an important milestone. More than 250,000 participants are 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 and services for the first time.

The disability supports provider market has also continued to expand, with more than 19,000 providers across Australia providing increased choice and control to participants over the supports and services they use to meet their goals.

At the start of 2019 the NDIS became available to all remaining groups of people and locations across Victoria, Tasmania and Queensland. This means the NDIS is now available to all eligible Australians in all states and territories except Western Australia. The NDIS will be available in all of Western Australia from 1 July 2019.

When fully rolled out, it is estimated that more than 460,000 Australians with disability will be supported by the NDIS. While our experience demonstrates that it sometimes takes a little bit longer for people to approach the NDIS—our priority has, and always will be, on delivering a high quality NDIS experience to all Australians with disability, their families and carers.

We are committed to continually improving the NDIS to ensure it delivers on its promise for people with disability, their families and carers.

It has been an incredibly busy six months at the NDIA so we are pleased to be able to update you on a range of improvements to make the NDIS the best it can be.

In the last six months, we have delivered:

- significant improvements to make it easier to engage with the NDIS and have a better planning experience:
    - a new easier-to-read plan format, developed in consultation with participants, which has clearer information on where to get help and includes an NDIS primary point of contact
    - a new psychosocial disability service stream that will support approximately 64,000 NDIS participants with psychosocial disability, as well as their families and carers
    - improved NDIS planning for people with complex support needs through the new Complex Support Needs Pathway

    - changes to pricing to support providers to deliver services to participants with more complex support needs
    - improved support and faster access to the NDIS for Australians with a hearing impairment
    - improvements to Assistive Technology processes including the introduction of a no-quote policy for purchasing items valued at under $1,500 and a one-quote policy for replacing items valued at up to $15,000.
    - a new accessible and easy-to-use NDIS website developed with input from participants, families, carers and providers
    - a new national investment strategy for Information Linkages and Capacity (ILC) Building that aims to build the capacity of non-NDIS participants by supporting organisations run by and for people with disability, their families and carers
- reforms to improve housing options for people with disability, especially those currently living in aged care:
    - changes to specialist disability accommodation so it will be included in participants plans up front, so participants, their carers or families can go into the market and find or commission a home that suits their individual needs
    - a new action plan to reduce the number of younger people living in aged care and to help them access more age-appropriate housing and supported living options
- a renewed focus on improving employment outcomes for NDIS participants:
    - establishing an NDIS Participant Employment Taskforce to better understand the barriers to employment, prioritise employment in planning and build the capacity of people with disability to participate in work
    - removing roadblocks for NDIS participants looking for work
    - an Economic Participation grant round designed to back innovative proposals that build the capacity of people with disability to participate in work

But our work is not done yet. Today we are announcing significant increases to some of the prices paid for the supports and services delivered under the NDIS. These changes are designed to encourage a healthy and diverse marketplace for disability services and enable NDIS participants to access a broad range of innovative supports to help them achieve their goals. Funding in participant plans will be automatically adjusted to reflect these price changes so participants can continue to access the same levels of support they are currently receiving.

None of these exciting changes would have been possible without the contribution of people with disability, their families, carers, providers and supporters in providing us with feedback and working with us to identify solutions.

We remain as committed as ever to ensuring the NDIS delivers on its promise for people with disability, not just for today but for generations to come.

We look forward to working together with all Australians into the future to deliver a successful NDIS.

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