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Welcome to the latest sector update on NDIS rollout and activities.

I would like to take this opportunity to provide an update on where Scheme rollout is up to and some of our key areas of focus this year.

We continue to welcome more participants into the NDIS.

The Scheme has grown from approximately 30,000 participants at the end of trial on 30 June 2016 to now more than 250,000 participants—an increase of more than 700 per cent in just two and a half years.

Almost one in three of these participants are receiving disability supports and services for the first time.

This is an historic achievement for people with disability in Australia.

The NDIS is a world first Scheme both in terms of what it is delivering for Australians with disability, and the speed and scale at which it is being implemented.

Despite the significant scale up and roll out, the number of participants entering the NDIS is lower than originally estimated by the Productivity Commission.

The original Productivity Commission figures were always estimates, based on data provided by states, territories and the Commonwealth. Through experience, we have learned:

- the data provided by jurisdictions and the Commonwealth represented their very best estimates, but the consistency and quality of this data has varied
- despite best efforts to reach Australians who may be eligible for the Scheme, there are some people who remain difficult to contact.

In practice, this has meant a significant number of records—almost 100,000—counted within the bilateral estimates actually included duplicates, deceased individuals, or information that

did not enable the NDIA to identify or contact individuals.

I would like to reassure participants, families, carers and the community that for every participant with an actionable record, the NDIA is on track to bring these people into the Scheme, as planned.

The Agency has extensive mechanisms in place with states and territories to make every possible effort to contact potential participants. We will, of course, continue to work with the states and territories, mainstream service systems, providers and community organisations to contact eligible people and support them to access the Scheme.

We also continue to welcome new participants who have never before received funding.

At the same time, we remain committed to working with participants, providers, families, carers and the community to deliver on the NDIS vision. With that in mind, I would like to provide an update on some of our key activities so far this year.

Supporting privacy and consent for participants

The Agency is absolutely committed to upholding participants' right to privacy and has recently clarified guidance for staff to facilitate third parties acting on behalf of participants with the participant's express consent.

The Agency supports participants' right to have a third party act on their behalf and appreciates the important role advocates and others play in supporting a participant's interactions with the Agency.

In order to act on behalf of a participant, a third party must have the authority to do so. Child representatives, plan nominees and court or tribunal appointed decision-makers (including guardians) already have the legal authority to do this.

Other representatives must have express consent from the participant, or their child representative, plan nominee, or court or tribunal appointed decision maker to act on the participant's behalf. This means the Agency will need to record a participant's express consent for someone like a legal representative, disability advocate, family member or friend to act on their behalf.

To support participants and their support network who seek to record this express consent, we have clarified the process and expectations for participants giving and recording express consent with Agency and partner staff. We are also working on an improved consent form to make this process simpler and clearer for all.

I would like to acknowledge and thank advocates and the sector for their feedback and engagement with the NDIA to improve participants' experience with the Scheme on this issue.

An improved Early Childhood Early Intervention experience

We acknowledge some families, carers and children have been experiencing longer than expected wait times accessing [Early Childhood Early Intervention \(ECEI\)](#) through our Partners in the Community. While these wait times have improved as communities continue to transition to the NDIS and additional ECEI Partners begin working with the Agency, we know there is further work to be done.

There are a number of factors at play, such as the sheer volume of children transitioning into the Scheme during the rollout period, the personalised and considered nature that is so crucial to effectively managing each ECEI access application, and the need to source and appropriately equip a large workforce to support the increased service being provided to young children under the NDIS.

We have worked hard this year to mitigate these issues, because we know how critical it is to getting timely support and care for children. Priority actions we have taken include:

- making sure we are reaching out to families and carers to make planning meetings as a matter of priority
- identifying where our appropriately skilled and trained Local Area Coordinator staff can support ECEI planning
- increased training to grow ECEI Partners' planning capability.

Importantly, I would note that while working through the NDIS ECEI process or awaiting an NDIS plan, children can still receive support from mainstream and community services. [The ECEI partner in your area](#) can provide you with more information on these types of services available to you.

Children will also continue to receive support from existing programs until they transition into the NDIS.

Pricing to support participant choice and control

I would like to take this opportunity to cover a few points regarding NDIS pricing. It was clear from the outset that the Scheme would be a large-scale change to the disability services and supports market. This change requires careful stewardship and management without limiting the Scheme's fundamental insurance principles and commitment to participant choice and

control.

The NDIA sets maximum prices for some disability supports while the market is developing to support the increased funding and consumer-driven demand under the NDIS. Price limits are based on analysis of the efficient costs of delivering disability supports and the time providers need to become more efficient. This approach is designed to maintain and grow the supply of supports, while ensuring value-for-money for NDIS participants and taxpayers.

The NDIA established the Pricing Reference Group (PRG), with two independent members, to guide NDIS price regulation during the transition to a mature market and eventual price deregulation. We established the PRG because we are committed to transparency and active monitoring of market settings to support the market's growth in response to the needs of participants.

Changes to prices are generally identified through an Annual Price Review where market trends and changes in costs are taken into account. The NDIA also has the capacity to respond to pressures and trends in the maturing market as they emerge. The Annual Price Review cycle to determine 2019–20 prices is underway and the Agency has already made some announcements as a result of this process, including:

- a significant increase in [price limits](#) for attendant care and community participation supports, and for therapy services effective 1 July 2019
- An additional increase in the price limit for attendant care and community participation supports through a Temporary Transformation Payment to support providers in transforming their businesses
- as of 1 July 2019 the price limit for [therapy supports](#) (excluding psychology and physiotherapy) will increase by almost \$11 per hour.

The combined effect of these changes is an increase in price limits between 10.9 per cent and 20.4 per cent. Importantly, these changes will be automatically reflected in the funding in participants' plans.

I would like to thank all the providers and sector representatives who have been engaging with the Agency on these changes over time.

Looking ahead

As well as welcoming more participants throughout 2019 we will continue to focus on implementing a range of significant enhancements to the Scheme. These include:

- [rolling out the pathways reforms](#), including delivering specific enhancements for participants with psychosocial disability and complex support needs

- [a new grant round to establish a national network of specialist providers](#) to develop robust support coordination services for participants with exceptionally complex support needs
- a range of engagement and access activities to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians into the Scheme, and support people living in rural and remote locations
- addressing issues identified through unscheduled reviews and participant escalations
- piloting programs to better connect people who are being discharged from hospital with the NDIS
- introducing clear service standards and operational improvements to reduce wait times for people engaging with the NDIS, including for Assistive Technology and Home Modifications.

The Agency is also committed to supporting the [Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability](#) . We welcome the Terms of Reference to frame this work, and will cooperate with the Commission and Government to support its success. I would like to recognise the commitment it takes from people with disability, their families, carers, and advocates for a Commission of this nature to be established and conducted.

As you would be aware, an election has been called and the Commonwealth Government is now working under caretaker arrangements until a new government is sworn in. During the caretaker period the business of government continues and ordinary matters of administration still need to be managed—which is important to us as a service delivery agency as we continue to roll out the NDIS. Please be assured there will be no disruption to the delivery of the NDIS during this period.

Thank you all for your ongoing commitment to the success of the Scheme. It is an honour to work closely with the disability sector to deliver the Scheme in the best interests of people with disability, families and carers, and I look forward to continuing this work through the year.

Rob.

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