26 February 2018

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) is pleased to release a more detailed Report on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Pathways Review (the Review).

While the NDIS is making good progress as it is rolled out across Australia — with more than 142,000 Australians now benefitting from the NDIS — the need to continually improve the experience that people with disability as well as service providers have with the Scheme is recognized by the Board and management.

The Review was initially announced by the Board in April 2017 to address feedback from participants, families, carers and providers that, for many, their experience had fallen short of their expectations.

This Report describes in more detail how participants, their families and carers and providers have and will interact in the future with the Scheme and the NDIA.

The Review focused on engaging with participants, providers, significant disability organisations and other stakeholders through workshops and one-on-one interviews. The objective was to understand their experience; to generate ideas for improvement; and to redesign and validate new improved participant and provider pathways.

Through this process, the Agency heard from more than 300 participants, providers and other stakeholders, including listening to more than 70 in-depth stories from individual participants, family members and carers. The Independent Advisory Council also provided significant feedback.

Overall, participants said they wanted more transparency and to feel more engaged, understood and supported throughout their interactions with the NDIS. Participants also emphasised the need for easy-to-understand, clear and accessible communications.

Central to the new participant pathway is the commitment to face-to-face engagement for all NDIS plan development, if this is the participant's preference. Other key features of the participant and provider pathways are:

- *A consistent point of contact*, who plays a key role in empowering participants to achieve their identified outcomes. Participants will maintain a relationship with their Local Area Coordinator (LAC) throughout the participant pathway, if that is their choice;
- *A stronger focus on the broader system of supports for people with disability,* including improved interactions with other government services such as health, education and transport, to promote greater inclusion and a sense of community for people with disability;
- *Communication which emphasises the objectives of the NDIS,* with a clear focus on outcomes and goals during planning discussions;

- *Information that is clear, consistent and available in accessible format*s, such as Easy English, braille, and languages other than English; and,
- *An improved NDIS portal and tools*, combined with more straightforward processes that will reduce administrative cost for providers.

The first pilot of the new approach to participant planning commenced in December 2017.

Provider pathway improvements are also underway as a result of this Review, particularly in the areas of learning about the Scheme and operating in the Scheme.

Providers also wanted clearer and more consistent information and policy guidance, "to be able to resolve issues more easily", as well as improvements to the portal and payment processes. Work is underway in both these areas.

An improved, web-based, interactive and easy-to-navigate Provider Toolkit was launched on 10 November 2017. The Toolkit is the primary resource to assist businesses that are considering entering the scheme, with the new platform including e-learning modules and self-assessment checklists.

Market information products are also being progressively developed and released to assist in making business decisions about how to meet the growth in the market and benefit from the opportunities the NDIS presents.

Further work is being progressed to tailor the participant pathway to meet the additional needs of people with disability in specific population groups such as young children, people with more complex needs, people with psychosocial disability, people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, people living in remote and very remote communities and people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. Tailored pathways recognise that some participants may need help to navigate the general pathway; especially-skilled or knowledgeable planners to work with them; or information that is culturally sensitive and/or accessible.

The program of work that has emerged from the NDIS Pathway Review sits side by side with other initiatives being undertaken by the NDIA including the Independent Pricing Review, commissioned by the Board of the NDIA in June 2017, which will be released by mid-March 2018 at the latest. Separately, work is underway to enhance market communications around delivering Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA).

The extensive work underway demonstrates the NDIA's commitment to continually listening to feedback and seeking to improve. The NDIA Board and Management are focused on building a world leading NDIS that improves the lives of people with a disability along with their families and carers. The pathways work will help ensure a quality experience for NDIS participants; help to grow a vibrant provider market that will be deregulated over time; and ensure the Scheme's

financial sustainability.

The NDIA will continue to provide regular updates on progress.

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