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Hello and welcome to my latest update about rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The last few months have seen a lot of progress for us in delivering a range of improvements to the NDIS, and while it is only October, we are now looking ahead to the great work we have to do before the end of the year.

200,000 NDIS participants now receiving supports

The NDIS reached a significant milestone last month – 200,000 participants (including those in the Early Childhood gateway) are now accessing the NDIS, many of those receiving disability supports for the very first time.

The NDIA and our Partners in the Community continue to work hard in supporting NDIS participants to access the supports and services they need to achieve their goals.

With almost half the estimated 460,000 people who are estimated to enter the NDIS now accessing the Scheme, we also continue to work hard at improving the NDIS experience. In this month's update, I am pleased to share details on a number of those efforts.

The start of October saw the roll out of the NDIS to new areas in [Victoria](#) and [Western Australia](#).

Specialist Disability Accommodation

In line with the Agency's maturing approach to market enablement, the NDIA will begin regularly releasing data on Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) supply and demand across the country. This information is important to the growth of the market through transition, and will provide more visibility so providers can better respond to the needs of participants as they enter the Scheme and develop their plans.

The first release is now live, and can be accessed by visiting the [Specialist Disability Accommodation](#) page. The NDIA continues to work toward releasing more detailed SDA data and the new webpage will be expanded and updated quarterly.

NDIS Pathways Reform

We also continue to deliver a range of improvements to the pathway experience – you would have seen a number of updates and announcements in this space recently.

Mental Health Australia (MHA) have released a report on the [NDIS approach to psychosocial disability \(external\)](#) . This report follows significant engagement between the NDIA and MHA to hear from participants with psychosocial disability about how the NDIS can be improved. I want to thank the participants, carers, families and providers involved in these workshops for their time and insights, and MHA for their ongoing support and collaboration.

I am pleased MHA will be working with the Agency on implementing a range of improvements to the [NDIS pathway for people with psychosocial disability \(external\)](#) . These improvements include things like:

- stronger connections between the NDIA and mental health sector;
- specialised training and teams to work with people with psychosocial disability engaging with the NDIS, and;
- a focus on recovery-based planning and episodic needs.

These improvements will be delivered in addition to improvements to the NDIS pathway announced in August, including a dedicated stream for children who are deaf or hard of hearing to access timely and appropriate supports.

One crucial part of the pathways reform is improving the communications and information participants receive to support them along their path with the NDIS. In line with this, we have released new participant booklets. These are an informative and practical tool participants, families, carers and providers can use to navigate the NDIS pathway. These are available in Easy English and Braille, while languages other than English will be available in coming months.

In September we also commenced a new participant survey, so we can get feedback on peoples' experiences at four points along the NDIS pathway; access, pre-planning, planning, and plan review. This is a quick five minute survey, the results of which will be used to compare with existing survey information to feed into the pathways reform work. This will provide better information on the experiences and outcomes participants are achieving with the NDIS, so we can continually improve the Scheme for all.

NDIA Fraud Strategy Statement

I am also pleased to announce the release of the [NDIA Fraud Strategy Statement](#).

The Fraud Strategy Statement summarises the NDIA's commitment to preventing and controlling fraud, and complies with the Commonwealth Fraud Control Framework 2017. The Statement also addresses the consequences of fraud, NDIA's responsibilities and how to report suspected fraud.

As has been previously communicated, the NDIA has strengthened its fraud control arrangements to protect the Scheme and the Agency from exploitation through fraud. The NDIA and Commonwealth Government will not tolerate fraud or the misuse of funds intended to support people with disability.

Assistive Technology (AT) and Home Modifications (HM)

[In May](#), I wrote about the AT and HM Redesign Project, established to design and implement improvements to AT and HM processes under the NDIS, including issues causing delays for some participants trying to purchase these supports.

Since then, the Agency has engaged with a range of providers and participants to develop a program of improvements to the processes for AT and HM planning, quoting, and claiming. Short-term improvements include;

- A new policy and process for low-cost (<\$1500) AT and HM that removes the need for quoting. Around 50 per cent of participants who use AT are positively affected by this change.
- Participants with Motor Neurone Disease (MND) will automatically receive \$7,000 in their plans for the immediate rental and hire of equipment.
- Changes that allow replacement items (particularly like-for-like) to be sourced quickly without needing reassessment or a new quote. This will positively impact participants who have outgrown their current AT or where an item has aged.
- Changes to allow timely repairs and maintenance by calculating an appropriate budget for comprehensive repair and maintenance coverage.
- A new funding tool will calculate appropriate AT funding for reasonable and necessary AT supports, replacing the current reliance on quotes. This is expected to be introduced progressively, and reduce waiting and processing times.
- Updated assessment templates will help ensure the right information is provided to inform planning.

I am pleased to share that a centralised AT and HM team is being established to take carriage of these programs of work. The team will remediate individual issues, identify and address any common barriers leading to delays, and design and implement further process improvements, including for more complex AT and HM.

The NDIA has also presented a submission to the [Joint Standing Committee Inquiry into the NDIS and Assistive Technology \(external\)](#) . Submissions have now closed, and the Committee is expected to report on 29 November 2018.

Autism Advisory Group update

The Autism Advisory Group (AAG) met again in the week commencing 17 September 2018. At the meeting the AAG reviewed their work plan through to the middle of next year. This sets the AAG's priorities in working with the NDIA to ensure a positive and consistent NDIS experience for people with autism.

The AAG also spent time discussing the work already underway through the pathways reform to improve the NDIS for autistic people, including young people entering the NDIS through our Early Childhood gateway.

Thank you as always for your ongoing collaboration and support of the NDIS.

Rob.

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3 December 2020