



Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS

Market Readiness for the National Disability Insurance Scheme

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Associate Professor Helen Dickinson, Director, Public Servi9.09999847 0 1199991319997 0 Q Tf 1 27.23600769

Summary and recommendations

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) promises a different way of designing and delivering disability services, one firmly committed to equity, self-directed support and service user choice and control. Although many participants report that they are satisfied with the NDIS,⁹ adverse experiences of the care planning process and highly variable access to services and resources under the scheme are well-documented.¹⁰ Teething problems are to be expected in a reform of this magnitude enacted and implemented in a tight timeframe, but our research suggests there are deeper issues at play in the gap between participants' expectations and experiences of the NDIS to date.¹¹ The scheme's rollout is outpacing the readiness of service users, service providers and the agency charged with implementing it to achieve its stated aims; and its sustainability hinges on its interface with mainstream public and community services, which is a minefield of competing priorities and jurisdictional ambiguities.

Our submission addresses the following terms of reference from the Committee:

- participant readiness to navigate new markets;
- the role of the NDIA as a market steward;
- market intervention options to address thin markets (excluding advice on remote Indigenous communities).

Our recommendations

1. Rather than focusing on the capacity of participants to navigate complex systems, make information about new markets and NDIS resources and processes more intuitive, transparent, streamlined, and more accessible for people with limited resources and/or limited decision-making support.
2. Give due consideration to participants' preferences in the care planning process and ensure that assessment of what is reasonable and necessary to fund from their preferences is transparent, clearly explained and well-documented.
3. Build a coherent regulatory regime that rewards collective-action solutions and partnerships between disability services and complementary services focused on consumer-centred support.
4. Encourage and support a diverse range of service providers in the market to minimise risk of oligopolistic practices and/or exploitation and neglect of people with disabilities in thin markets. Levers could include incentives for remote, niche and/or non-profit providers and firms employing people with disabilities to enter and remain in the market; a system of soft checks to identify supports that providers in thin markets may need to stay in business; and the use of discrete seed funding and grants for types of service provision identified as thin markets.

⁹ <https://www.ndis.gov.au/medias/documents/h91/hbc/8805559468062/Report-to-the-COAG-Disability-Reform-Council-for-Q1-of-Y5.pdf> p.4

¹⁰ Productivity Commission (2017) *National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Costs* <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/ndis-costs/report>

¹¹ For example: Warr et al (2017) *Choice, Control and the NDIS: Service Users' Perspectives on Having Choice and Control in the New National Disability Insurance Scheme*. Melbourne: University of Melbourne; Carey G, Dickinson H, Malbon E & Reeder D (2018) 'The Vexed Question of Market Stewardship in the Public Sector: Examining Equity and the Social Contract through the Australian National Disability Insurance Scheme', *Social Policy and Administration*, vol. 52, pp. 337-350

meant that many participants - particularly if they did not have access to informal sources of

