

The NDIS Road Ahead

Webinar Q&A

Q1. Have you had any government responses to these issues (pricing/lack of changes to pricing) that you can share? Are future submissions happening?

Emily: We have heard in closed door meetings that action is underway to address the removal of high intensity payments with behaviour support, and to address other long-standing issues with the pricing like incorrect application for index for SIL. And I've heard there are considerations being made for a relief mechanism. These are things I've heard before. While we are not stopping the advocacy, and we are hopeful for some things, I am somewhat cynical for how much government is willing and able to do at this point in time.

I think the price relief and the cost of registration and running an organisation is such a critical argument for why we need independent pricing. That's not to say it will fix all the longstanding issues that we are dealing with, but it will be a significant improvement. The fact there have been price freezes for half a decade on most of the services delivered by NDIS providers is a completely untenable position.

Jeremy: One of the outcomes from these huge enquiries around what contributes to quality services is that we know now what things are needed and wanted from the Australian community. The independent pricing approach is a real opportunity to have that reflected. We know from the different reports that visibility of providers will be really important and that registration is the vehicle for how they are looking to achieve that. In terms of registration, from the session today, 70% of attendees think that Support Coordination should only be delivered by registered providers.

Emily: I was recently speaking to the acting commissioner. The advice from the current leadership is that Government don't want to see a large unregistered market, nor do they want to see services and the availability of supports falling over by trying to cram everyone into a deeply imperfect scheme.

There is absolute agreement from the commission, that it is not up to scratch. They have been under resourced and underfunded for some time, their systems are not capable of dealing with suddenly trying to register thousands of active providers. They do want to start prioritising what a better registration scheme looks like.

Answer to Q1 continued... One thing they acknowledge is the sheer cost of being registered. Providers want to provide quality service. Providers recognise that with a quality regulatory system - but if it's costing 30-40k to do an audit, and all the red tape, duplicative systems to manage, etc - it's not worth it for a lot of providers.

Barry: Just back to the funding question. From dealing with people within the agency, and other bodies, we can't expect to see a price change, despite the pricing review. Everyone acknowledges that support coordination has it extremely tough. There is no mechanism, or discussion, around an interim pricing relief that I'm hearing. It won't be until the next pricing review, until there will be an opportunity for that pricing to change. The situation is what it will be like until June/July 2025 and even then it is not guaranteed. The Plan Managers are also doing it tough with the increasing compliance burden and barriers imposed onto providers.

Q2. We are seeing a lot of DV situations from participants. The DV providers have advised this is due to reductions in participants NDIS funding. DV providers don't have capacity due to their overwhelming intake. There is no emergency housing due to the housing crisis. It ends up falling on providers. We are not an emergency service and the response time from emergency services is significantly long. What is the best way to manage moving forward?

Emily: The best thing you can do is continue to report this to the NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Commission. Their role is to manage the safety and quality of services across the scheme and if the services are not able to be delivered in a safe way, not available, or they're not funded, then the commission, being the direct conduit to the minister and government, needs to know.

Q3. So, no more plan managers?

Emily: The recommendation of NDIS review is that it will transition away from plan management as we know it now. Although that is the recommendation of the review, that is not government policy. So what that looks like and how long that is, is the big question.

Barry: There is an important differentiation between payments and plan management. The government wants to internalise the payment system, however the role of the plan manager, which is by far the more important aspect, is an ongoing need and perhaps something that will sit within the navigator role, although we do not yet know.

Q4. Will navigators be employed directly by the NDIS? Do you know if navigators will be able to operate as a sole trader, or will they need to be linked to a large company or employed directly by the Federal Government?

Emily: These are exactly the questions we are asking the government. This question goes right to the heart of the complexity of the reform agenda, because the sorts of questions like 'what will that look like?', 'Who's employing them?', 'Who pays for them?', are the sorts of questions that states, territories and the federal government need to pin down. They aren't necessarily just sitting within the NDIS; they may be sitting within foundational supports across the two schemes, and state and territory governments will have their own views about what they need and how they should be commissioned and employed. That is all unknown at this stage.

Q5. Is direct payment from participant to Plan Mgr open to fraud in some cases?

Fraud is a risk in the NDIS both in the current and future proposed operating models. The NDIA has established a Fraud Fusion Taskforce to tackle fraud now. The reduction of fraudulent activity will be a significant focus on any changes to how payments are made in the NDIS.

Looking forward, the NDIA is currently exploring Claims at Point of Support (CPOS) and the NDIS Review has proposed a future where payments from NDIS plans to NDIS providers are both made and validated digitally. This "centralised online platform" and "multi-channel digital payment system" proposes a new way of checking that NDIS funds are being paid in the correct amount to the correct people for the correct supports.

Page 721 of the NDIS Review's Supporting Analysis begins to offer more detail what the NDIS electronic payment system proposed in their Final Report could look like.

Q6. As current support coordinators, should we go and get plan management training?

The NDIS Review has proposed significant changes to how the supports and outcomes currently delivered by intermediary services are achieved in the future. The NDIS Review has also recommended a five year transition that prioritises continuity of support for participants and a smooth transition for the workforce and market.

Answer to Q6. continued... Page 323 of the NDIS Review's Supporting Analysis begins to offer more detail about the role, functions, and competencies for the Navigators proposed in their Final Report. There are significant details that need to be finalised before any proposed changes start to happen. The Government is yet to give a formal response to the recommendations or the Navigator function proposed by the NDIS Review. Public consultation has only recently opened surrounding the design of Foundational Supports and how the Navigator function might work within this new disability service landscape.

Q7. Does anyone have a checklist to prepare for audit?

There are many resources online to support organisations with an audit that may be of use, such as:

- NDIS Quality and Safeguards Resources hub hosted by NDS: nds.org.au/resources/all-resources/ndis-quality-and-safeguards-resources-hub
- The Quality and Safeguards Sector Readiness Project: nds.org.au/resources/all-resources/nds-quality-and-safeguards-sector-readiness-project-resources-and-tools
- Regular training: nds.org.au/events-and-training

Q8. When we report fraud we never get a response. I have reported numerous cases and have not ONCE had a response from the NDIA saying they received the report. Something needs to be done about minor fraud. Has this been discussed with the agency?

There have been widespread reported issues with how complaints have been handled and how the NDIA and NDIS Commission work together. Recommendation 10.18 of the Disability Royal Commission surrounded improved complaint handling procedures and responses at the NDIS Commission.

There have already been changes made at the NDIS Commission and we look forward to an improved process with how reported issues are handled.

Q9. As a support coordinator with complex clients, we are finding it extremely difficult when the client needs mental health services and yet they refuse to pick them up, especially case management. We have so much difficult just trying to engage participants with. My question is that will these mainstream service and clinical services have changes with the NDIS?

Disability service providers regularly report needing to 'fill in the gaps' with mainstream service systems if they want to ensure the wellbeing of the people with disability they support.

Findings and recommendations in Volume 6 of the Disability Royal Commission focus on the health care and treatment of people with disability. Recommendation 2 of the NDIS Review was to increase the scale and pace of change in mainstream and community inclusion as well as to improve the connection between mainstream services and the NDIS.

Further to [recent meetings of the Disability Reform Ministerial Council](#) we look forward to more information about how State, Territory, and Commonwealth Governments will be improving mainstream service systems for people with disability.

Q10. What's the support available for individuals under the age of 65 and not eligible for NDIS? There does not seem to be the required support available for this group since the commencement of NDIS.

State, Territory, and Commonwealth Governments progressed different arrangements for their disability-specific support services during the transition to the NDIS. For example, the [Queensland Community Support Scheme](#) currently offers low intensity community access and domestic support for Queensland residents under 65 and not eligible for the NDIS. [The Disability Gateway](#) can help people with disability and their supporters to find the support they need in Australia.

It is widely accepted that there is not enough 'mainstream' supports available for people who need support but are unable to access NDIS funding. This specific point has been addressed in the NDIS Review and more supports for this group is central to a long-term sustainable NDIS.

Q11. how do we report fraud when participants are terrified of repercussions?

It is strongly encouraged that any fraudulent activity is reported to the NDIA for investigation. If necessary, highlight concerns for participant safety and contact the Police if necessary.

You can report fraud and suspicious behaviour on the NDIS website via the link: <https://www.ndis.gov.au/contact/report-suspicious-behaviour>

Q12. There is a real challenge with NDIS treating individuals as parts rather than a whole. Do you have recommendations on how to best support clients with comorbidities that are interlinked with their primary disability but not funded by the NDIS? Individuals with psychosocial disability (dependent on level) struggle to maintain stability which makes it difficult to reduce their need for SC's over time.

Disability service practitioners regularly highlight the barriers to delivering tailored and person-centred supports within systems that are impairment- and deficit-focused. Good practice in disability service delivery stems from understanding and supporting the person, not just their diagnosis.

Similar feedback was heard by the Disability Royal Commission and NDIS Review and contributed to their recommendations about the need for service systems to focus on the 'whole of person' going forward.

For disability practitioners going forward, the recent advice to Government from the [NDIS Provider and Worker Registration Taskforce](#) included recommendations for a worker registration scheme that would enable ongoing professional development and opportunities for workers to boost their skills in managing the barriers they experience in practice.