

TechnologyOne resource paper

# Recent developments in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)



The disability sector is changing rapidly. Both in Australia and internationally, Government and disability support providers are responding to developments in contemporary disability practice, particularly a focus on people's abilities, person-centred planning, engagement of natural supports and community participation.

The sector is re-orientating supports to enable them to become more flexible, and responsive to the aspirations and needs of individuals. In Australia, the transition from block funding to individualised funding has required a rapid adaptation to this new model. Significantly, disability support agencies are considering their business structures and practices to ensure they can operate in an increasingly competitive business environment.

In Australia, these changes are also supporting the sector to prepare for the full implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The NDIS is the next stage in the evolution of the planning, funding and delivery of supports for people with disability. The scheme commenced in July 2013 (across four trial sites, expanded to seven sites in July 2014). When fully operational in 2019, the NDIS will deliver an insurance based approach to funding support for people with a disability. The scheme has been described as '...the greatest change to Australian social policy in a generation'<sup>1</sup>. The NDIS will provide individualised funding to eligible participants. The scheme has been designed '...to ensure that people with disability can access reasonable and necessary supports, that there is an assurance of support over a person's lifetime, and that the scheme remains sustainable over the long term.'<sup>2</sup>

The full implementation of the NDIS will commence progressively from July 2016. Over the past 12 months key developments of the NDIS have included:

- Reviews of some participants' individual support plans
- NDIS supports being configured into three streams
- Shared living arrangements and individualised funding
- The framework for quality and safeguarding framework
- Community capacity building

This white paper outlines these key developments and what they mean for your organisation.

## Individual support plans and measuring outcomes

Reviews of support plans for early scheme participants are now being conducted in some launch sites. The Barwon, Hunter, Tasmania and South Australia launch sites were established in July 2013 and the ACT, Barkly Region (NT) and Perth Hills (WA) launch sites were established in July 2014. Initial support plans were typically for no more than 12 months, with some initial support plans being three or six month's duration.

Each support plan documents the support needs of the NDIS participant, their goals and aspirations. The support plan then details the responses to the participant's support needs (the actions, or strategies) and how the achievement of goals or aspirations will be identified (the outcomes or success criteria). These actions or strategies include accessing mainstream, community, informal and NDIS funded support.

The plan is evaluated as part of the plan review process. This evaluation includes measuring outcomes by reviewing whether each outcome has been achieved. The achievement (or non-achievement of outcomes) informs the development of the subsequent support plan. Where an outcome is not achieved or is only partially achieved it is unlikely that the same support will be funded without evidence of why this same support remains the most appropriate response to a support need or the most effective strategy to achieve a goal. Some outcomes may require the use of outcome measures to provide a robust and objective means of quantifying change for the participant. For example, standardised measures may be used in series (at the beginning and end of the plan) to measure overall support needs before and after a transitional living program. Other outcomes may require a statement that the person has achieved the outcome. For example, where the person has a goal to participate in a particular activity the review of the plan will examine whether the person is now participating in that activity in the manner identified in the plan and to show how support is enabling the participant to achieve this goal.

Outcomes will need to be demonstrated for all supports funded under the NDIS.

## Streams of support under the NDIS

In July 2014 the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) announced that supports would be allocated to one of three categories:

- Consumption
- Capital
- Investment

Consumption items include those supports that are seeking to support a participant in a task, activity or role without necessarily affecting a change in the participant's function. This includes support with personal care, recreation and access to the community.

Capital items include adaptive equipment (such as wheelchairs), home modifications and vehicle modifications.

<sup>1</sup> House of Representatives, *National Disability Insurance Scheme Bill 2012: Second Reading*, 2012, Commonwealth of Australia. . p 13877

<sup>2</sup> House of Representatives, *National Disability Insurance Scheme Bill 2012: Second Reading*, 2012, Commonwealth of Australia. . p 13877

Intervention items include supports that are seeking to affect change for a scheme participant or their supporter. This includes early intervention, therapy, behavioural supports and sustaining family care arrangements.

This framework has been introduced to maximise participants' choice and control and to support social and economic independence. Participants will:

- Be seeking to derive maximum value from their total package;
- Have increased flexibility in how they use their total package, including the proportion used for consumption, capital and investment items; and
- Will have an increased focus on outcomes.

## Shared living arrangements and individualised funding

In the aged care sector there is an increasing move towards individualised funding in shared living arrangements (support delivered in residential arrangements). In the disability sector this is referred to as individualised funding. The operating principle is the same in that:

- Access to funding is based on a standard access process that includes some measurement of the person's support needs
- The level of a person's support need is used to inform decisions regarding the amount of funding provided
- The person has choice and control over the supports that they access and who provides the support

The transition from block funding to individual funding means service providers need to adapt if they are to remain competitive.

For providers this is a significantly different approach to the traditional approach of 'block funding' being allocated to a shared supported living arrangement. The use of business systems and processes to enable tracking of funding use and the effective sharing of resources will become a key part of business as usual operations for providers of shared supported living arrangements and their clients.

## Quality and Safeguards Framework

In February 2015, the NDIA released its consultation paper on the Quality and Safeguards Framework for the NDIS. The consultation period for the paper has now closed and a new version of the paper is being produced. This new version will be a Decision Paper that will be provided to the Council of Australian Governments Disability Reform Council. The purpose of the paper is to assist Ministers to make decisions about quality and safeguarding in the NDIS.

Although the decision paper has not yet been released it is known that there will be implications for providers in both IT and in reporting systems. This may include providers having systems for documenting and reporting regarding:

- Incidents and near misses;
- Complaints;
- The use of restrictive interventions; and
- Compliance with employee screening procedures.



## Community capacity building

The initial design of the NDIS included three branches of operation called tiers, being:

- Tier 1 – for all Australians, providing benefits by undertaking activities to maximise social participation, to minimise the impact of disability and by providing a broad based disability insurance scheme.
- Tier 2 – for people with, or affected by, disability, delivering information, referral, web services, and community engagement, including to people who are not NDIS scheme participants.
- Tier 3 – for people who are scheme participants, providing funded support for people with a disability who have significant care and support needs or who may benefit from early intervention.

Tier 2 is now referred to as information, linkages and capacity building (ILC) and incorporates five streams of service/support delivery:

- Information, linkages and referrals
- Capacity building for mainstream services
- Community awareness and capacity building
- Individual capacity building
- Local area co-ordination (LAC)

The policy framework for ILC was agreed by the COAG Disability Reform Council in December 2014. The states and territories are now undertaking targeted consultations with key stakeholders. Although it is anticipated that funding is likely to be available to sector organisations to undertake community capacity building, further details have not yet been released and these arrangements are

subject to discussions between the Commonwealth and the states. It is anticipated that with this funding will come an increased focus on outcomes; that is, on the evaluation of ILC initiatives and activities. Community capacity building projects will need to design both the project and the evaluation of project outcomes. Projects will need to include up front data collection and outcomes will need to be reported within the agreed framework throughout the project and at project completion.

## Conclusion

The introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme represents a 'watershed' moment in the lives of Australians with a disability. The scheme promises timely and appropriate support for a person's lifetime, enabling them to live with dignity, and fulfil their potential. The provision of support under the NDIS will also offer people with disability and their carers the opportunity to increase their community and economic participation.

Individualised funding is becoming the dominant paradigm for the delivery of all disability supports, and is being increasingly used across other sectors such as aged care. Examining possible synergies across other sectors (such as aged care), may assist service providers to consider opportunities for efficiencies, business expansion and merger.

The NDIS will significantly impact how providers receive funding and the way their business operates. This impact will flow through all facets of their business, and providers will need to examine their system and reporting capabilities to ensure they can keep up with the changing environment.

QUALITY ENDORSEMENT - ISO9001 Quality Management Systems - Requirements | ISO27001 - Information Security Management Standard

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