

Statement on the Rural and Remote Strategy 2016-2019

The NDIA Rural and Remote Strategy (Strategy) was developed in 2016 to guide the roll out of the NDIS in rural and remote Australia during transition.

The Strategy recognised that people with disability in rural and remote Australia, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, might require additional support to access the NDIS, receive an NDIS plan and use their supports. At 31 March 2021, 6,664 people with disability living in remote and very remote locations were receiving NDIS support, an increase of 342 per cent over the past three years.

The NDIA has released a progress update on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement Strategy, detailing the Agency's key activities over the past four years against the 10 priority areas identified in the Strategy. The update also articulates additional actions to further drive the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement Strategy over the next 18 months.

In addition, in June 2020 the NDIA released the [Participants across remoteness classification report](#). The report provides valuable insights on the profile and experience of participants and their families and carers by remoteness.

The NDIA's current approach to remote service delivery aims to deliver:

- Quality participant plans with the inclusion of supports that are culturally relevant.
- Improved social and economic outcomes for participants by addressing existing supply gaps at a local level, including the use of alternative commissioning for supports where required, and improved coordination between disability and mainstream services.
- Coordination across all levels of government to maximise the outcomes of the Scheme, recognising that the NDIS is part of a broader government service delivery ecosystem in remote communities.
- Access to specific service types or markets at a whole-of-region level through thin market trials and alternative commissioning approaches.
- Improved outcomes at a whole-of-community level by implementing a place-based approach that delivers participant outcomes and facilitates solutions.

To support this approach, the Government has implemented the following key measures in remote Australia:

Remote Community Connectors

As trusted community members, Community Connectors play a critical role in identifying and engaging with people with disability and their representatives.

At March 2021, the NDIA employed 173 Remote Community Connectors covering 274 rural and remote communities over 90 Local Government Areas throughout NT, SA, WA and QLD.

Higher price limits for supports in remote and very remote areas

The NDIS Price Guide allows higher price limits for some supports in remote and very remote areas as a response to higher operational costs to deliver services in these areas. From 1 July 2019 these loadings increased from 20% to 40% for remote participants and from 25% to 50% for very remote participants. The funding in NDIS plans of remote and very remote participants also increased, in line with these loadings.

The 1 July 2020 Price Guide introduced changes to provider travel rules to improve the ability for providers to claim non-labour costs associated with travel, encouraging wider service delivery and increased choice for regional and remote participants to access disability-related supports that were not available previously.

Improved NDIS services via Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations

The Australian Government is investing \$5.9 million in the NDIS Ready project, which aims to increase the number of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations registered to deliver NDIS services.

Through NDIS Ready, the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation is working with its affiliates, and also Community Controlled Health Organisations to increase the supply of culturally appropriate and localised NDIS supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability.

Thin market trials

On 13 December 2019, the Disability Reform Council agreed to use a more flexible approach to address market challenges with the NDIS. In line with this, the NDIA, the Department of Social Services, state and territory governments and key stakeholders are progressing thin market trials in all states and territories.

These trials focus on market intervention approaches to address issues that may limit participant access and market growth. Current trials are applying a mix of market facilitation, coordinated funding proposals and direct commissioning.

Results for market interventions currently underway include:

- In Wyndham, East Kimberly, WA market facilitation has led to an increase in therapy supports for thin market trial participants. Average payments increased by more than 30 per cent, from approximately \$1,500 in March 2020 to more than \$2,000 in September 2020.
- In MacDonnell, NT average payments across all supports for thin market trial participants increased by 186 per cent, from \$11,872 in March 2020 to \$34,000 in September 2020. During the same period, average payments for thin market trial participants in Alice Springs, NT increased by 56 per cent. These results were achieved through the use of market facilitation, and collaboration with support coordinators, the NPY Women's Council, Waltja, and Purple House.
- In the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands, SA market facilitation has led to an increase in core supports and support coordination utilisation for thin market trial participants. Average payments increased by 300 per cent, from \$2,135 in March 2020 to \$8,552 in September 2020. In addition, a number of local arts centres have expanded their services to deliver NDIS supports. Direct commissioning arrangements will commence from mid-2021, and are expected to result in further improvements.

Next steps

The NDIA will develop a position statement on remote service delivery in 2021-22 to further enhance the NDIS experience and outcomes for people with disability living in remote Australia.

Download the:

- [Rural and Remote Strategy \(PDF 1MB\)](#).
- [Easy Read - Rural and Remote Strategy \(PDF 3.4MB\)](#).

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