# End of year message from NDIA CEO, Martin Hoffman

[Martin Hoffman]: Hello, I'm Martin Hoffman and I've been CEO of the National Disability Insurance Agency for six weeks now.

As we approach the end of the year in the festive season I wanted to reflect on our joint achievements, share with you my first impressions and look ahead to 2020.

There is a great deal to be proud of from the past year. At the end of September, after six years of the NDIS we now have more than 311,000 people benefitting from the Scheme including around 114,000 people, over 1 in 3, who are receiving supports and funding for the very first time from our society, many more than were originally envisaged.

Over that period, the NDIA's focus has been bringing a large number of people into the Scheme.

The NDIS continues to grow with around 2,000 Australians receiving their first NDIS plan each week.

After the last three years of transition to full scheme roll out, the NDIA has delivered the Scheme in each of the States and Territories according to the bilateral estimates - on time and as scheduled.

Up to 500,000 Australians with disability are now expected to benefit from the NDIS within the next five years.

And now, as the Scheme matures, we need to examine every aspect of the participant experience.

To improve people’s experience this year, we have implemented important Disability Reform Council policy decisions, including funding for disability related health supports.

We have worked to resolve delays and backlogs in general, and especially for children with disability in accessing ECEI supports. But I know there is more to do in this space.

We have released our employment strategy with the aim of having 30 per cent of NDIS participants of working age in employment by 2023. We have provided more guidance for participants and providers on Specialist Disability Accommodation.

We have also taken a more open approach to sharing the data that helps guide our work, including the Participant Outcomes Data Report, publishing one the largest surveys of people with disability, their families and carers in Australian history.

This data shows the NDIS is already improving people’s lives from children having more friends to play with, to families and carers increasing their time at work, the NDIS is making a real difference in homes and communities across Australia.

In my first six weeks in the role, I’ve been meeting participants, families, carers, providers and sector representatives all across Australia to hear about their experience of the NDIS and how we can improve.

I’ve met with the Ministerial Disability Reform Council, our Independent Advisory Council, Sector CEOs Forum, State and Territory senior officials, the Autism Advisory Group, and many, many other sector and peak body forums.

From that, I know we share a commitment to continuously improving the NDIS.

We have high expectations – and rightly so.

We all want it to work.

In November this year, Minister Robert set out his plan for the NDIS that is centred on delivering a better outcome for participants with six key areas of focus.

Part of that plan will be the Government’s response to the Tune Review of the NDIS legislation and rules, with a focus on improving wait times and processes for participants.

This will include the NDIS Participant Service Guarantee, which is expected to be in place from July 2020. The NDIS Participant Service Guarantee will outline what participants can expect when accessing the Scheme and receiving their plans, including how long these decisions must take.

The Minister’s plan calls for introducing independent functional assessments for access and review decisions following the current second pilot in the Nepean / Blue Mountains area of NSW and moving to joint planning, and shared plan summaries and draft plans.

We think these improvements are very important for participants and their families and we are committed to working closely with you all to develop and implement them.

Looking ahead, 1 July 2020 represents one of the most important milestones in the history of the NDIS.

This is when the NDIS will become available across all of Australia and the transition of people with disability from state and territory service systems is due to be completed.

And that just means continued focusing on improving the participant experience and maximising the benefits of what the NDIS can offer to Australians with disability.

And so internally, we’re going to reduce our internal road blocks, silos, and bureaucracy, and strengthen our State and Territory based leadership.

I know some participants have had a poor experience with the Scheme.

That is not what we want and we still have work to do on resolving backlogs, timeliness and consistency of decisions and reviews.

We’re also going to fix our payment processing times so providers are not waiting on their necessary funds.

We’ve started work on the Pricing Review due to be in place from 1 July. We’ll see improvements in our digital experience capabilities for participants and providers.

And improvements in the provision of services to participants with complex needs requiring critical supports, as well as Young People in Residential Aged Care, remote and indigenous communities, to name just a few.

And more work on building capacity in the sector for genuine local area coordination with both our LAC partners and through the ILC grant program.

We have a lot to do.

We have a strong commitment and a clear plan on how to deliver these improvements we will be providing you with regular updates on how we are tracking to deliver and improve outcomes.

We can do it when all of us – participants, partners, providers, and the NDIA – work together to ensure the Scheme is doing what it was set up to do to improve the lives of people with disability, their families and carers.

And so I look forward to working with you as we continue to deliver this remarkable world-leading Scheme.

My best wishes to you and your families over the festive season. Enjoy it, stay safe, and I look forward to seeing you in 2020.