**Transcript – Martin Hoffman CEO Update**

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| Martin Hoffman | Hello, I am Martin Hoffman, the CEO of the NDIA.  There’s been a lot of discussion recently about the NDIS, so I wanted to provide you with a personal update.  As you know last year the Government announced the plan for significant reforms to the NDIS.  While for many the scheme has been life changing, I think we all agree the scheme could be even better.  We know at times the NDIS has not delivered the choice and control promised and that the Scheme can be complex, difficult to understand and even more difficult to use.    The independent Tune Review made 29 recommendations to improve the Scheme and the current reforms align to a number of those.  We also released our Participant Service Improvement plan last year, and that outlines more than 50 specific improvements to the Scheme, and we are working hard to deliver on that plan.    We’ve already made some of the improvements, which many of you have told us are a positive change – things like longer plans, simpler processes to make small changes to plans and reducing the wait lists and backlogs.  But I also know that the reforms around what are known as independent assessments have caused concern for some of you, your families and the wider disability community.  We are working very closely with our new Minister for the NDIS, the honorable Linda Reynolds, to support further genuine consultation, together with more information and clarity about these reforms.  Key to this will be the completion of the independent assessment pilot – which is progressing well with more than 2,500 assessments completed so far, and many more participants opting in to take part, and I want to thank everyone who has been involved with that.  There are three main pillars, or building blocks of the NDIS that are essential for ensuring successful participant outcomes and greater choice and control, as well as ensuring the Scheme’s future.  They are:  Firstly, independent functional assessments, provided by the NDIA to ensure fair access and planning decisions for all Australians with disability.  And then, defining a “reasonable and necessary” funding package in a fair way for each person, rather than individual support by support.  And thirdly, flexibility, full flexibility for participants to use their package in a way which best meets their needs, and if needed, providing support to use that funding in the best way.  These building blocks of the NDIS were fundamental to the original design of the Scheme, as set out in the original recommendations of the Productivity Commission.  Our goal should be that each person with disability has greater choice and control over their own lives and receives a fair level of support appropriate to their support needs, whether that be with an individual NDIS package, or early intervention support, or where appropriate, in community supports.  I want to again reiterate that independent assessments are a reform that we have been working on because they will deliver the right personalised budgets, to support participants to have more control over their supports and their lives.  We want to move away from the welfare approach of today - where effectively we say ‘yes you can have that much of this’, and that much of that, and ‘no, to this, and yes to that’ to a Scheme where the participant themselves or their family spends their overall reasonable and necessary budget in a way that is best for them.    Given the recent discussion about Scheme costs, I also want to talk about the affordability of the Scheme.  While the overall NDIS budget is going up and will continue to do so, at the moment the rate of this growth is increasing at a much higher rate than expected.  Like any budget, we have a responsibility to make sure that the growth is affordable over the long-term so the Scheme is available for current and new participants well into the future.  This is not about stopping growth – both the number of participants and the Scheme’s overall budget will continue to grow. In March alone, the Scheme paid for $2.2 billion worth of supports, $640 million more than the same month last year.  Our focus is on ensuring we have an affordable NDIS that is enduring and one that delivers the NDIS as originally intended – with greater flexibility – not one where ever tighter controls or rules restrict how you use your budget.  We all have a shared goal to improve the Scheme and I want you to know that I care about getting this right.  I know the team at the NDIA shares this commitment and we are working hard to deliver an NDIS that supports people with disability to have better lives, and one that all Australians can rely on.  Thank you. |
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