

On this page:

[Key achievements in 2018](#)

[What are we focused on in 2019?](#)

[Recent highlights](#)

Welcome to the final sector update on the NDIS for 2018.

This update covers what we have achieved together in 2018 and signals where we are heading in 2019.

I'm looking forward to continuing to work with all of you in 2019, which we anticipate will be our largest year to date, and will see the NDIS available everywhere across Australia, except for some locations in WA.

Key achievements in 2018

- More than 208,793 Australians are receiving disability supports through the NDIS. This is a significant milestone as almost half of the estimated the 460,000 people are now accessing the Scheme.
- Designed, piloted and have started national rollout of new pathways for a better participant and provider experience.
- Developed a [new approach to ILC](#) for more inclusive communities.
- The number of registered providers increased from 10,507 to 17,925 (September 2017 to September 2018).
- Began implementing recommendations from the [Independent Pricing Review](#).
- Launched the [Market Enablement Framework](#).
- Rolled out the Provider Relationship Management Model, which will provide a dedicated point of contact for over 400 large providers in early 2019.
- Established a Fraud Taskforce in place to ensure the Scheme is protected against unscrupulous activities.
- Increased the NDIS workforce from 4,500 to 6,100 staff and partners (September 2017 to September 2018) so the pace of the rollout is met.
- Designed and rolled out new organisational values that capture the motivation, passion and integrity of our people and the Scheme.
- Successfully transitioned to a new contact centre provider who are delivering a high level of service to our participants and providers.

What are we focused on in 2019?

- Quality participant plans and outcomes as we continue to welcome more people into the scheme than ever before.
- Supporting participants to achieve their goals, including meaningful employment in more inclusive workplaces.
- Greater clarity on issues where the NDIS interacts with other government and community services like health, mental health and justice systems.
- Deliver the roll out of the planned pathways approach including for people with psychosocial disability, ECEI, complex support needs, and hearing impairment and ongoing systems improvements for providers.
- A focus on an improved service experience Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability and for people with disability living in rural and remote locations.
- Supply market growth including delivery of a new payments strategy.
- Improvements to Assistive Technology process and timeframes.
- Ongoing engagement with the disability sector.
- Increased focus on employment of staff with disability within the NDIA.

Recent highlights

Tasmania Full Scheme Agreement

On 10 December, Federal Minister for Families and Social Services, Paul Fletcher, together with the Tasmanian Premier, Will Hodgman, and the Tasmanian Minister for Disability Services and Community Development, Jacque Petrusma, [announced a landmark agreement that locks in enduring arrangements for the NDIS in Tasmania](#) . At full Scheme, the NDIS is expected to support around 10,600 Tasmanians with disability – over 5000 of whom are already receiving support.

New and improved NDIS website

On 11 December, the Agency released a test version of a new NDIS website. The new website aims to improve the NDIS user experience and will be trialled for a period of six weeks to allow time for feedback on the design, structure, accessibility and layout. You can provide feedback on the website or through the dedicated email address websitefeedback@ndis.gov.au. We created this new website by engaging widely with participants, families, carers, providers and sector representatives. The new site will permanently replace the existing site in the New Year.

Western Australia

WA Partners in the Community

Federal Minister for Families and Social Services, Paul Fletcher, and the Western Australian Minister for Disability Services, Stephen Dawson, [announced the NDIS Partners in the Community in Western Australia](#) on 7 December. Mission Australia and Advanced Personnel Management (APM) will deliver local services to about 39,000 Western Australians with permanent and significant disability at full Scheme. Like Local Area Coordination Services (LAC) in other states and territories, Mission Australia and APM will support participants in implementing their NDIS plans and access supports in their local communities. The [NDIS in Western Australia page](#) contains the areas which LACs service.

WA Market Review

The NDIA has commenced a [WA Market Review](#) that will consider whether current pricing controls and market settings in WA take into consideration of local circumstances. This Market Review acknowledges that WA did not initially agree to join the Scheme when the Independent Pricing Review (IPR) was conducted in 2017, and will make recommendations on whether these controls should be modified to support WA providers transition to the NDIS. The Review commenced in December 2018 and will deliver recommendations to the newly-established [NDIA Pricing Reference Group](#) in April 2019. The Agency will aim for implementation from 1 July 2019.

Markets

Review of Pricing of Therapy services

While the IPR recommended a two-tiered therapy pricing structure, feedback from therapists and the broader sector prompted the NDIA to undertake further analysis and consultation. As a result, the Agency will [review the pricing structure for therapy services](#) for both therapists and therapy assistants. The Review aims to provide a structure that is reflective of the therapy service, the geographical location, and whether it is an initial or ongoing consultation. The Review will also consider benchmark prices for other comparable Schemes, and explore the possibility of deregulation in some markets. The Agency will publish a draft price list for therapy services in March 2019, with implementation to follow shortly afterwards.

Arrangements for very complex support provision

The Agency acknowledges participants with more complex support needs require skilled staff to deliver some supports. This often involves higher costs for providers.

The current pricing system has two levels of price controls for assistance with self-care and recreational activities. As of 1 February 2019, this will be replaced with three price levels, which will be linked to the skill level of the worker delivering the support. The new three levels of price controls includes:

- Level 1: standard needs (as per [2018/19 Price Guide](#))
- Level 2: complex needs (5.6 per cent loading as per the current approach)
- Level 3: very complex needs (new loading of 10.3 per cent)

A Temporary Support of Overheads (TSO) on levels 2 and 3 will also be introduced. This is consistent with a TSO introduced on standard needs which occurred on 1 July 2018. The TSO will remain in place at 1.25 per cent in 2019/20, and will be removed in the following year.

Reduced Activity Period update

During the festive season, the NDIA is [reducing its hours of operation](#) from 25 December 2018 to 1 January 2019 (inclusive). Regular hours of operation will resume on Wednesday 2 January 2019. Some Partners in the Community offices will remain open during this period to provide support to participants, except on public holidays. The NDIA National Contact Centre (1800 800 100) will also remain open during this period, except on public holidays. When required, every region and the National Contact Centre have access to escalation contacts. The [NDIS payments schedule](#) during the festive season is available on the website.

Best wishes

At the end of a productive year for the Agency and NDIS – and my first full year at the NDIA – I would like to thank all of you reading this for your ongoing collaboration and support in 2018. We all know it is a big task we're all undertaking together – rolling out the first National Disability Insurance Scheme in the world, with some ambitious timelines. But we have achieved much together this year – from rolling out in new locations and to people with disability who have never before received supports, to reforming the Agency's processes and delivering notable improvements to the Scheme.

As we head towards full Scheme in 2020, the NDIA and our many valued stakeholders will continue working hard, and working together, to make sure we are delivering a Scheme that makes a difference for people with disability in Australia.

Rob.

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