

16 January 2019

## Building a better NDIS

We're making big changes to the way we deliver the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) to help people with disability get the supports they need to achieve their goals.

### What is happening now?

In October, it was announced that the NDIA would progressively roll out a number of changes across the country to improve people's individual journeys with the NDIS – known as the participant pathway. The pathway describes the customer interactions that participants will experience, from first learning about the NDIS, creating their NDIS plan and, for some, leaving the NDIS to receiving support from other services.

Here are some of the recent changes we've made:

### Improved planning supports

We're making a number of changes that will provide a better NDIS experience for all Australians:

- Clearer links with community, mainstream, informal and employment supports — to ensure people get what they need from other services (such as housing, education and health systems)
- Face-to-face planning support will be offered to participants during the critical pre-planning and plan implementation stages.
- Stronger connections between NDIA planners and Local Area Coordinators (LACs), who will become a consistent point of contact during the participant's journey.
- Skilled planners and improved training — improved training for LACs and planners will increase their ability to engage with and support participants' unique situations and diverse needs.
- Easier-to-understand information — we introduced an improved version of the participant plan in November 2018 that is easier-to-understand and use. Key information and communication material will be provided in Easy English and in languages other than English.

[Read about the new-look participant plan.](#)

We introduced three participant planning booklets in August 2018 to help current and future NDIS participants, their families and carers understand the NDIS pathway and what to expect

throughout their NDIS journey.

- [Booklet 1 - Understanding the NDIS \(PDF 371KB\)](#)
- [Booklet 1 - Understanding the NDIS \(DOCX 73KB\)](#)
- [Booklet 1 - Understanding the NDIS Easy English \(PDF 1.2MB\)](#)
- [Booklet 2 - Planning \(PDF 467KB\)](#)
- [Booklet 2 - Planning \(DOCX 86KB\)](#)
- [Booklet 2 - How to make an NDIS plan Easy English \(PDF 3.3MB\)](#)
- [Booklet 3 - Using your NDIS Plan \(PDF 534KB\)](#)
- [Booklet 3 - Using your NDIS Plan \(DOCX 95KB\)](#)
- [Booklet 3 - Using your NDIS Plan Easy English \(PDF 1.1MB\)](#)

## Different support for different needs

We recognise that a single pathway approach is not suitable for all people with disability. That's why we've developed tailored pathway improvements for people with disability who have specific disability, cultural and/or communication needs:

- A new complex support needs pathway has been established to provide specialised support for participants with disability who have other challenges impacting their lives such as mental health issues, incarceration or homelessness, and need a higher level of specialised supports in their plan. This approach includes specialised planning teams, NDIA liaison and support coordinators – people who have the networks, skill and knowledge of government and community services to provide the support required for complex needs.

[Read about the new complex support needs pathway.](#)

- Australians with hearing impairment will receive improved support and faster access to the Scheme. We've made it easier to understand which individuals with hearing impairment can access the Scheme, made changes to some pricing for hearing supports, and made changes to speed up access for children aged 0 to 6 with a hearing loss. Newborn children and people with a severe or profound hearing loss or auditory neuropathy have been escalated for urgent response.
- Improvements are also being made to better-support people with severe and persistent mental health issues – known as a psychosocial disability – who are eligible for the NDIS.

A new 'psychosocial disability service stream' will support approximately 64,000 NDIS participants with psychosocial disability, as well as their families and carers. This reform follows recommendations by the national peak organisation, Mental Health Australia.

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[Read about the psychosocial disability stream](#)

- **Service enhancements** are complementary customer service approaches that focus on culturally-appropriate and locally-tailored communication and engagement needs to ensure a participant receives a consistent level of pathway support – wherever they live in Australia or whatever their individual circumstances. An example of this is the Community Connector, a community-based and trusted resource that helps build understanding about the NDIS.

[Read the announcement of pathway improvements \(external\)](#)

## What's happening in 2019

### Improved planning support

Progressive rollout of training for staff in the Northern Territory, Queensland, Victoria and South Australia to support the implementation of improved planning support. This training has previously been delivered to staff in Western Australia, New South Wales, Australian Capital Territory, and Tasmania.

### Enhanced Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) pathway

Appointment of ECEI practice leads, in various locations around Australia, to provide specialised support and build early childhood capabilities across the NDIS workforce. This enhanced ECEI approach will improve consistency of ECEI planning and support an increased understanding of early childhood intervention best practice.

### Complex support needs pathway

Improved support for participants with complex support requirements will be implemented in the local government area of Canning, Western Australia.

### Building disability understanding in the NDIS

Training will be provided to NDIS staff across the country to strengthen their understanding of a variety of disability types. This training will support a more individualised approach to planning and plan reviews with participants, their families and carers.

## How we got to this point

We reached out to participants, families and carers, providers and the disability sector across Australia to identify areas for improvement. We will continue to work with participants and learn as more people join the NDIS to ensure our approach is inclusive for all people with disability.

## How it began - the pathway review

The NDIA initiated a 'Pathway Review' in April 2017 to address feedback about people's interactions with the NDIS. We worked with more than 300 stakeholders from all states and territories to identify areas for improvement to ensure people have consistent and positive NDIS experience. Feedback was captured in the 'Improving the NDIS Participant and Provider Experience' report, released in February 2018.

- [Read the full report \(PDF 836KB\)](#)
- [Read the summary report in Easy English \(PDF 487KB\)](#)

## Listening to the community

We then held 37 workshops across Australia from October 2017 to April 2018 – and spoke with more than 1,100 people – to understand how the proposed pathway could better respond to a diverse range of needs. Workshop attendees directly impacted new pathway designs and included a mix of participants, families, carers, providers, peak organisations, state and territory representatives, NDIA staff and agency partners and disability advocates.

A Participant Reference Group was established in January 2018 to provide a mechanism for further stakeholder engagement to inform NDIS pathway improvements. The group includes people with disability, their families and carers. Group members travel from all over Australia to attend the meetings (every six weeks) and have had broad NDIS experiences.

We also held two pilots in 2018 to test key planning features of the new participant pathway. More than 1,200 participants were involved across three states (Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland).

## Ongoing improvement

We are continuing to engage with participants to implement further improvements the planning journey.

We have also tested features that have been rolled out nationally, bringing more immediate improvements to the participant experience:

- A simpler and quicker process to make minor changes to a plan
- Removing the need for participants to obtain quotes for low-cost assistive technology (up to \$1500 for Level 1 and 2 assistive technology)
- Providing participants with the option to allow their providers to view their plan in the portal so providers can better understand their goals and tailor their services accordingly.

## The new pathway for providers

Providers are critical to the success of the NDIS. We need a strong and vibrant provider market that contributes to improving outcomes for participants. As part of the new provider pathway, the NDIA will provide better information and insights to support business decisions and make it easier for providers to interact with the NDIS and connect with participants.

Pathway reforms include system and service improvements for providers to promote an innovative market of supports and services. This includes:

- Clear and easy-to-understand policies — the first recommendations of the Independent Pricing Review were implemented in July 2018. Information to assist participants, providers and investors to understand new markets is provided regularly. [Read the latest Independent Pricing Review update.](#)
- Clear registration process — provider registration is being simplified through a nationally consistent approach. States and territories started transitioning to the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission from 1 July 2018 (South Australia and New South Wales). Other states and territories will transition to the Commission on 1 July 2019 (with the exception of Western Australia, which transitions on 1 July 2020). [Read about NDIS quality and safeguards.](#)
- Connecting providers and participants – new features have been added to the Provider Finder tool available via the myplace portals. This includes improved search features and an upgraded mapping function to make it easier for participants to locate services and providers.
- Effective and efficient payments to grow the market — a dedicated National Provider Payments Team continues to work with providers to resolve specific claiming issues while broader improvements are made to the payments system. The team works with providers to promote understanding of the payments system.

- Easy-to-use portal and website — recent improvements make it easier to create and edit service bookings, along with improved self-help guides. Ongoing myplace improvements are planned to streamline and simplify provider interactions with the Agency.
  - Proactive engagement approach — regular engagement with providers to build the NDIA's understanding of business needs and increase awareness about the purpose of the NDIS.
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## **Related articles**

### **[Pricing update and more support for participant choice and control](#)**

Date

1 April 2019

### **[Improved NDIS planning for people with complex support needs](#)**

Date

16 November 2018

### **[Improving the national NDIS experience](#)**

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30 March 2019

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