18 August 2014

People with disability are accessing the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) in record time and costs remain on track, according to the scheme's latest quarterly data.

The "Report on the sustainability of the scheme", released today, shows the average cost of individualised NDIS support packages in the first year of the scheme was $34,600* within the funding expectation of $35,000.

National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) chairman Bruce Bonyhady said while early data needed to be approached with caution, a picture was starting to emerge.

"What we are seeing is a scheme built on evidence continually identifying and implementing better ways of doing things, and adjusting to its surroundings," Mr Bonyhady said.

"The time it takes for an access decision to be made is testament to this," he said.

"The average time taken to determine eligibility from launch in July last year to the end of December was 29.7 days. In the last six months to June 30 this has more than halved to 13.3 days.

"This significant improvement is the result of a number of operational reforms within the Agency, and reflects its effective learn-build-learn-build approach.

"The NDIS is all about the people it supports, and the Agency will continue working to streamline its processes to benefit them and their families."

Key findings of the report on the four trial sites in the Hunter (NSW), Barwon (VIC), South Australia and Tasmania include:

- Participant satisfaction remains very high at 1.66 on a scale of -2 (very poor) to +2 (very good).
- 8585 people have been found eligible for the NDIS, with 7316 having approved individualised support plans in place by the end of June.
- The average package cost in the first year of the scheme is $34,600, down from $40,500 in the first six months, and below the funding expectation of $35,000.
- More than $130 million is estimated to have been committed to NDIS participants in 2013-14.

Mr Bonyhady was pleased the data revealed consistently high participant satisfaction.

"However, we are committed to listening to, and learning from, people's experiences with the scheme in order to continually improve it," Mr Bonyhady said.

“Participant satisfaction to date is also reflected in the very few appeals lodged with the Administrative Appeals Tribunal just 19 to date,” he said.

“This level is unheard of for a human services organisation and, I believe, demonstrates that people with disability and their families are well-informed of the decision-making process.”

The NDIA is committed to continual improvement and current work includes:

- Implementing a way of measuring outcomes for participants, their families and carers. This will provide feedback about particular groupings of scheme participants and the extent to which the Agency is meeting its objectives.
- Developing strategies and models of support for Indigenous communities, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, rural and remote communities, and for mental health.
- Establishing appropriate sector data collection to monitor the price and cost of supports delivered.

Mr Bonyhady said the data showed the experiences of the trial sites and feedback received was helping to build the NDIS.

“Operations are continuously improving and its budget is on track it is financially sustainable and governed by insurance principles,” he said.

“A groundbreaking new scheme like the NDIS the biggest social policy reform in 30 years is not perfected by simply willing it. It requires putting in the time and effort to get it right.

“I would like to thank the many, many people that have committed their time and effort – participants, their families, service providers, MPs and the broader community. Your input, ideas and feedback will ensure the NDIS is the best it can be and is available for current and future generations.”

* Average cost excluding Stockton, a large group home in the Hunter that is temporarily distorting the numbers.

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