Victorian State-wide Equipment Program (SWEP) shares its success operating under the NDIS

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To work successfully in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) environment, the Victorian State-wide Equipment Program (known as SWEP) started restructuring its business model early. It implemented various strategies, which it said helped it to stay abreast of the new reform and to remain viable and competitive.

SWEP Operations Manager, Jeni Burton said SWEP was a strong advocate when it came to getting the ground-breaking NDIS reform over the line.

"We were part of the Every Australian Counts campaign, which brought about this significant disability reform, so we understood early we had to restructure our business model," she said.

Since 2010, SWEP has been supplying all Victorians with assistive technology on behalf of the State Government. It supported the NDIS in its three-year Barwon region trial, and it is continuing its service throughout the full Victorian NDIS roll out.

"SWEP provides all sorts of equipment, from basic bathroom items, wheelchairs and other mobility devices, through to home and vehicle modifications and continence equipment," Jeni said.

"What we've done over the seven years we've been operating is built in a service delivery platform to sit under a solid governance structure. It keeps the focus on our clients and quality outcomes."

SWEP NDIS Team Manager, Teagan Hegert, works hand-in-hand with Jeni, and said SWEP has had great success with a Repairs and Reissues Model it also implemented.

"Once we've provided a person with equipment, our job doesn't stop there," Teagan said. "We have an ongoing responsibility to maintain it. If it breaks down or the person has issues, they can call us on 1800 800 110, 24/7, 365 days a year.

"Once we get their call we triage response timeframes, according to how reliant the person is on their equipment and what carer arrangements they have in place. If need be, we can get a repairer to them within a few hours, regardless of where they live in Victoria.

"To simplify a lot of our processes, we've also created several efficiencies in the way prescribers submit application forms too," Teagan said.

"When we first transitioned issuing centres, which used to manage the age and equipment programs, some prescribers had to write a thesis just to get someone a shower chair, while in other areas they could just make a phone call and order a complex power wheelchair, so what we did was standardise the prescription process in terms of required forms.

As for advice to other providers, about how to successfully transition a business to work successfully in the NDIS environment, Jeni said for SWEP, preparation was the key.

"It is imperative service providers understand the changed environment they will be operating in," she said. "And their business model must be agile enough to be able to adapt to position themselves in the NDIS market place," she added.

Jeni and Teagan also credit SWEP's success to working cohesively, building in a service delivery platform to sit under a solid governance structure, and working closely with the NDIA to see where it can value add.

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