EBL QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER • SUMMER/AUTUMN EDITION • MARCH 2021

In this edition

Celebrating 40 years of Service!

This year we celebrate 40 years of providing respite, accommodation and recreational support to people with disabilities! In recognition of this, we share uplifting and heartfelt stories relating to the support we provide. We continue to recognise the work of our dedicated employees to support the health and wellbeing of participants so that they can live their best life.

A Note from the Chair

Welcome to 2021. I hope everyone was able to enjoy time over Christmas and the New Year with friends and family. At least here in South Australia, our lives would seem to be much less restricted than in some of the other states. I have just been to Melbourne to visit family for the first time in more than 12 months, and now suddenly, because of a new community case in Melbourne, I find that I must have a Covid test, and isolate until I get a negative result. So the message for this year I think is that we still cannot rely on anything for certain. We have to remain vigilant, adaptable and alert.

I know that all the staff at EBL are continuing with safe hygiene practices, and every site has its dedicated QR code check-in to assist with contact tracing. (And can I say, from my Melbourne experience, that the QR code here in South Australia is so much quicker, and more reliable, because it's overseen by SA Health. In Victoria, each shop, café, supermarket, etc has a different QR code – so time-consuming, because most people give up and go and write their details down on the sign-in sheet – all using the same pen to sign in!)

As I've said before, I am very grateful to be living in South Australia, and not somewhere else in the world. Our government, in conjunction with the SA Police and SA Health continue to do a really wonderful job of keeping us safe.

We are all hopeful that our clients will be able to undertake their usual supported work and day options routines, that respite services will be able to remain operational, and staff in both client support and administrative roles can continue in their respective workplaces.

As the saying goes, we hope for the best, but we plan for the worst, or at least things changing in the blink of an eye!

Sue Chapman

Chairperson
EBL Disability Services

CELEBRATING • 40 • YEARS • OF • SERVICE

A Word from Wendy

As we head towards the cooler months, we reflect on the huge amount of work that has been underway here at EBL Disability Services in response to the ever-changing world of COVID and NDIS.

It's fair to say that we have always experienced peaks and troughs in our business. Especially, in recent times with the introduction of the NDIS. However, last year was relentless with the added burden of navigating coronavirus transmission risks across the EBL Community.

This time last year, COVID upended life as we knew it in a matter of weeks. Twelve months on, the pandemic has been brought under some semblance of control and we now prepare for the rollout of new vaccines. For the first time in many months there appears to be hope that some aspects of life as we knew it will return.

This year, we celebrate 40 years of providing respite, accommodation and recreational support to people with developmental disabilities. We take this moment to thank those wonderful families who fought fiercely back in 1981 to establish services in the northern suburbs for children with intellectual disabilities and their families. In recognition of this remarkable milestone, we share uplifting and heartfelt stories highlighting the support we provide today because of the vision and courage of those original EBL founders.

In this edition, we share the most recent insights to help our community prepare for the next phase of change. This includes updates about the COVID-19 vaccine rollout here in SA. We hope you find these updates useful. Many of you will have been in touch with your nominated EBL Manager to discuss consent and the option for your child (or family member) to opt in/or out of the COVID vaccination program. Please don't hesitate to get in touch on **8252 1000** if you need more information.

We also share an article about the new independent assessment panels being tested by the NDIS. This assessment process will change the way people with disabilities are assessed for funding in the future. As in the past, we will continue to support our community to navigate these changes every step of the way.

Last, but never least, we salute our amazing devoted employees who work tirelessly to support the health and wellbeing of participants so that they can live their best life.

Thank you to each and every one of you for your ongoing support.

Wendy Warren

Chief Executive
EBL Disability Services

EBL Carer Advisory Group

Coronavirus has been challenging for us all, however, being a parent of an intellectually disabled child who is going through medical issues can be exhausting. Last year, my daughter who lives in supported accommodation was going through times of being unwell and not very willing to go to the doctors, therefore staff would call a locum to come to the house where she was more comfortable. It was not easy to diagnose when she was not able to explain what was happening or even if in pain. The staff's observations had to guide the doctor. Almost 6 months later after a day of not wanting to eat, drink or get out of bed an ambulance was called. She did not resist going in the ambulance at all which was a sign that it was quite serious. She received care from Modbury Hospital who diagnosed her problem and then was sent to the Lyell McEwin. The staff at Modbury were excellent and while the problem was corrected at Lyell McEwin, I did not see the same level of empathy from their nurses on the wards. While my daughters health is improving she still needs monitoring.

My reason for sharing this with you is to highlight the fact that the disabled do not always get the care they should from the medical profession. I often think after leaving a doctors surgery of things I should have said or asked or that I should have been more forceful with what I thought should have happened. They do not under-stand how difficult it is for our children to co-operate in having an x-ray or blood test taken. I did write to our local surgery with a complaint about one of the nursing staff. I will admit I had gone into the surgery under my daughter's name as she would not come with me. The nurse soon realised I was not that person and was not sympathetic about my situation. When I insisted on seeing the doctor as I needed to get my daughter's problem solved she left the room and a door slammed very loudly not long after. The doctor rang me following the letter and discussed what they could do in the future but he did not comment about the attitude of the nurse which I highlighted in my letter until I mentioned the subject. I was told she would be spoken to, so had trust that he would do so.

I could give you more situations like this and I am sure you have experiences of your own. I asked my previous G.P. (a female) who has a brother-in law with intellectual disability (therefore more under-standing of our circumstances) if a hospital would have any policies or procedures when dealing with our children. Her response was that in the overall picture disability patients are about 1.5% of the population and she was not aware any that do. My reason for asking her this was after yet another horrible experience in a private hospital to acquire a blood test.

It is important to advocate for our children to get the best outcome we can even if we do not always feel comfortable doing so. To those that can do it easily maybe you would like to share some of your strategies with other parents at an EBL morning tea. We have 4 morning teas scheduled for this year and you will receive and invitation closer to the date. Please mark on your calendar May 27th, August 16th and November 19th for this year's upcoming morning teas. If you have any concerns you would like to discuss please contact me on **0411483976**.

Last but not least a big thankyou to Emily (House Manager) for her support and help over the last 9 months and staying with us for many hours at the hospital.

Dawn Brodie
Convenor
EBL Carer Advisory Group

A message from Lois Boswell Chief Executive, DHS

Last year, we were shocked and saddened by the horrendous death of Annie Smith.

Today, criminal proceedings against her former support worker returned to court.

While I will not risk prejudicing these proceedings by making any specific comments on the matter, I would like to acknowledge the real improvements that have been made to our systems of safeguarding for vulnerable people with disability.

While Annie was an NDIS participant and no longer one of our clients, South Australia has rightly taken the time to reflect and learn from the horrific failings in her care.

We at DHS are working hard to respond to the recommendations of the independent safeguarding task force, including:

- The establishment of a new, state-wide individual advocacy service to help South Australians with disability access and receive the supports they need;
- Supporting more than 90 state authorities to publish their Disability Access and Inclusion Plans;
- Executing new signed agreements with the Commonwealth to allow information held by the NDIS Commission to be shared with state agencies; and
- Expanding the powers of the Adult Safeguarding Unit to cover vulnerable adults living with disability.

You can read more about each of these actions on the DHS website.

While there is still more work to be done, these actions have made a meaningful difference to the lives of vulnerable people with disability in our state.

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COVID-19 NEWS

COVID-19 vaccine roll-out: disability provider alert

The Commonwealth's Department of Social Services has distributed an update on 18th February 2021 on the COVID-19 vaccine rollout to the disability sector.

Under Phase 1a of the national rollout strategy, people with disability, disability sector workers and supporters have been identified as priority populations.

Eligible vaccine recipients in the disability sector include:

- A person with disability living in residential accommodation (in settings with two or more people with disability only); and
- A paid worker providing support to people living in residential accommodation with two more people with disability.

Phase 1a: people with disability in residential accommodation

From Monday 22 February, a small number of sites across Australia have been identified by the Commonwealth's Department of Health (DoH) as the first locations to receive Phase 1a vaccinations. DoH will contact these initial sites and work closely with the providers.

DoH will continue to consult closely with key sector representatives to ensure the Phase 1a rollout for people with disability is safe and fit-for-purpose.

Even if you have not been contacted yet, the Commonwealth strongly recommends that all Phase 1a providers:

1. Start having conversations to ensure everyone is informed about the priority roll-out and understands the vaccination program; and
2. Review the ATAGI consent pack at bit.ly/ATAGIConsentPack and start discussions with people with disability or substitute decision makers about consent as soon as possible. Additional resources will be available soon for people with disability to support consent.

The provider update can be found at bit.ly/ProviderUpdateNDIS and also includes information about the COVID-19 Vaccines Implementation Plan for the disability sector, and a range of FAQs have developed as a result of consultation with the sector by the Commonwealth.

NDIS provider alerts relating to COVID-19 vaccines can be accessed at http://bit.ly/ProviderAlerts.

South Australia's COVID-19 vaccination program update

SA Health has advised that the first COVID-19 vaccinations in South Australia are expected to be given to priority cohorts on Monday, 22 February at the Royal Adelaide Hospital and Flinders Medical Centre.

Please visit the SA Health website at bit.ly/SAHealthSite to access FAQs about the vaccination program. SA Health's Q&A session, hosted by Professor Nicola Spurrier yesterday on Facebook, also provides useful information about the safety and efficacy of the vaccines. You can access a recording of this event at http://bit.ly/SAHealthFB.

AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine granted provisional approval

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has granted provisional approval to AstraZeneca Pty Ltd for its COVID-19 vaccine, making it the second COVID-19 vaccine after the Pfizer vaccine to receive regulatory approval in Australia.

The Pfizer vaccination will be administered in the initial rollout of the vaccines.

Further detail about the AstraZeneca vaccine can be found on the TGA website at bit.ly/C19VaccineTGA.

COVID-19 vaccine resources

The Australian Government Department of Health has put together a range of useful information about the vaccines that you can access on their website:

- How COVID-19 vaccines work at bit.ly/HowC19Works
- How COVID-19 vaccines are tested and approved at bit.ly/Test-Approve
- Are COVID-19 vaccines safe? visit bit.ly/AreTheySafe

COVID-19 information in your language

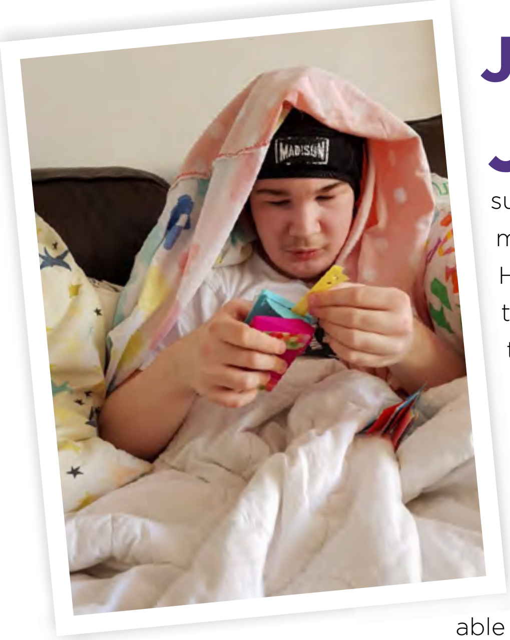
The Department of Health website provides information about COVID-19 vaccines that has been translated into over 60 languages. For more info, visit: bit.ly/InYourLanguage.

Information for people with disability

The Department of Health has compiled information for people with disability about the COVID-19 vaccines on its website at bit.ly/CovidInfoDOH.

Advice and resources for COVID-19 vaccine providers

A collection of resources for health professionals containing advice and guidance on delivering COVID-19 vaccinations, including a consent form, will soon be available on the SA Health website at bit.ly/SAHSite.



Joel’s Story

Joel has been living at Parafield Gardens for nine years. With the full support and trust of Wendy, Peter, his mum Bronwyn, the dedicated team and House Manager, Michelle, we have had the pleasure of supporting Joel. Along the way, we’ve had many challenges and many fulfilling and joyful times. Joel was unable to participate in formal education as this was just too stressful for him so the decision was made to home school.

With home schooling we were able to implement an individualized and modified curriculum into Joel’s daily life at any time thus alleviating the stress for Joel of time constraints and having to attend a bricks and mortar school. In the last two years, we have worked collaboratively with Modbury Special School for Year Eleven and Twelve with Joel as an external student.

Over the years, we have learned more about Joel’s unique communication style and this has worked well for all of us. We learned his way of communicating instead of him having to learn our way as this was stressful for him. Over the last nine years Joel has increased his independent skills and demonstrates a level of enjoyment in his day.

Joel recently turned 18 and had a wonderful time at his party, enjoying cake and non-alcoholic bubbles.

Carer Advisory Group Phone Survey

Earlier this month, the Carer Advisory Group conducted a short phone survey of respite clients. We also wanted to advise the clients about the rebuild of the respite centre and that EBL has been providing respite for people with intellectual disability and autism for the last 40 years. Something that will continue during the respite centre rebuild.

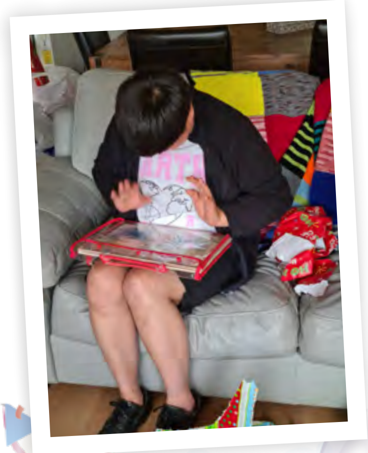
- **58%** of clients were able to take our call. We appreciate that not everyone is available during working hours.
- **100%** were happy with the staff.
- **99%** were happy with communication

A few clients would like staff to introduce themselves when booking in.

Tanya Gallas is looking to solve this issue. Some clients had specific questions that I could not answer, therefore, Tanya will contact you as early as possible.

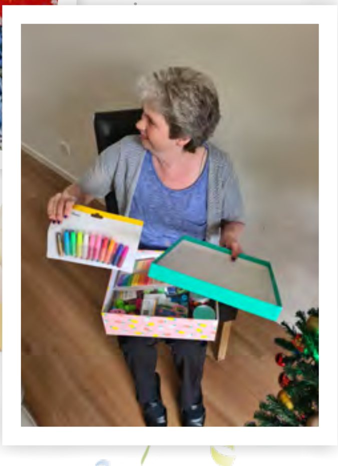
Thank you to those who participated.

Dawn Brodie
Convenor
EBL Carer Advisory Group



Christmas Celebrations

Belinda, Lisha, Mel and John from Ashburton opening their Christmas presents!



Shay and Ashley, Xmas enjoying Christmas Day

Ashley - received from EBL- Purple hairdryer and straightener.

Shay - hairdryer and all the goodies in the Xmas box next to her and the hat she is wearing.

Amy - Mimco purse to match her Mimco bag she purchased herself.

All beautiful girls said thank you from their heart.

Joel turns 18!

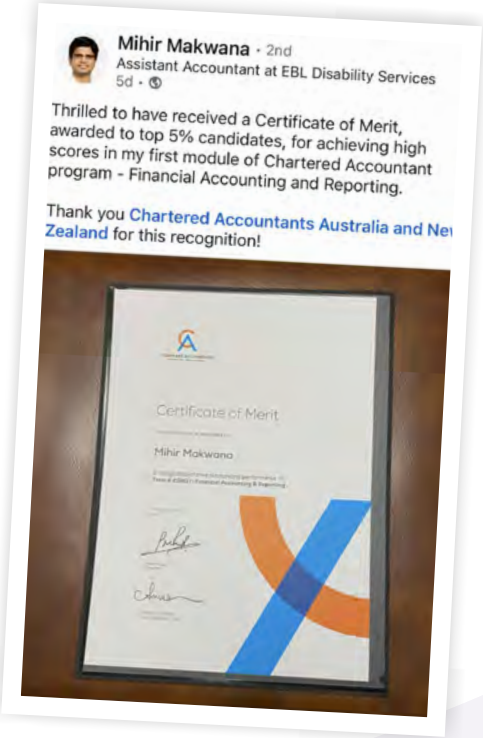
Happy 18th Joel!

52 Years Young!

Nick doesn’t look a day over 21.....just years of experience and lots of smiles!

Congratulations Mihir!

Congratulations Mihir Makwana for all your hard work to achieve your Certificate of Merit. We are all very proud of you Mihir! Well done!



Mihir Makwana · 2nd
Assistant Accountant at EBL Disability Services
5d ·

Thrilled to have received a Certificate of Merit, awarded to top 5% candidates, for achieving high scores in my first module of Chartered Accountant program - Financial Accounting and Reporting.

Thank you Chartered Accountants Australia and Ne
Zealand for this recognition!

Certificate of Merit

Mihir Makwana

Harrow House Update

At Harrow House, everyone is loving getting back out and about attending shows. Monster Trucks and No Strings Attached Fringe show, “Ignition Point”, which Alex was performing in, to name a couple. Club Slick returns Friday 29th March and the Tutti Choir has an upcoming show in the DreamBIG Festival in May. The house also has an outing planned for mini golf at Hahndorf. Plenty of exciting times ahead!

2020 EBL Respite Camp

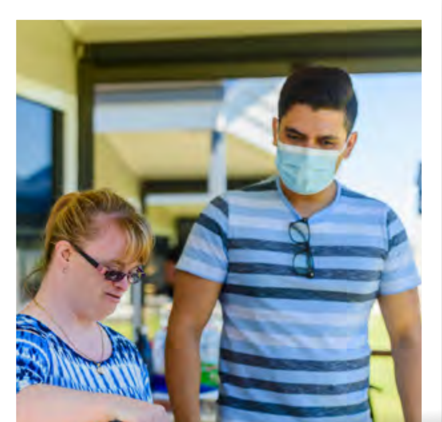
To mark the end of 2020, many of the respite participants took part in the EBL Respite Camp at West Beach.

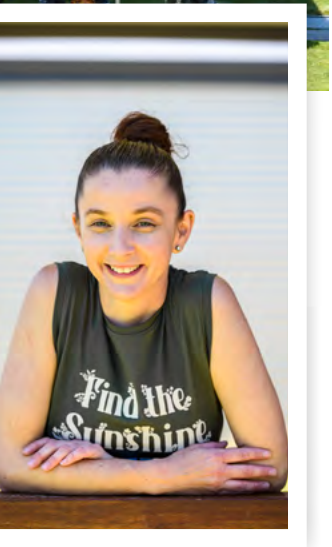
The participants were blessed with 4 days of beautiful sunshine and glorious weather.

The camp was filled with lots of laughs, smiles and fun.

The participants spent their time swimming, playing soccer, mini golf, visiting the beach, exploring the activities on offer at West beach, having their face painted and enjoying a magic show.

Fun was had by all who attended it was a great way to finish off 2020.





Respite 2020 Camp!

We are so excited to share the fun in store at this year's Respite Camp hosted by **EBL Disability Services**!

Where: West Beach Caravan Park

When: Thursday 17th December – Sunday 20th December

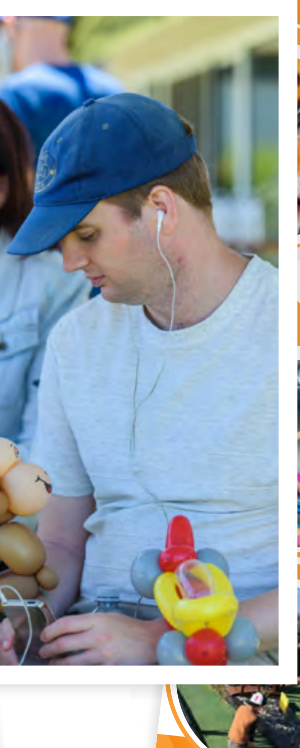
Itinerary:

Thursday 17th Dec
Pack cars and leave from DPA
Stop for Lunch on the way
Arrive and settle in for our stay (check-in time 2pm)
BBQ
Board games, walk along the beach

Friday 18th Dec
2 hours at Bounce
Then trip to Semaphore for lunch and icecream
Return to West Beach
Activities at West Beach
Dinner at The Shack café onsite

Saturday 19th Dec
West Beach Activity Day
Face painting
Balloon artist
Magician
BBQ Lunch
West Beach Activities

Sunday 20th Dec
Pack the cars to head home (check out time 10am)
Stop for a game of Mini Golf at West Beach
Lunch on the way home
Arrive back at Davoren Park



NDIS Independent Assessments

An important update for families from the NDIS.

Key facts

- Independent assessments are free.
- An independent assessment will take around 3 hours.
- You can choose to have it at a place that suits you, or by video call.
- The results of your assessment will help us work out your NDIS supports and budget.

Independent assessments provide you and the NDIS with an understanding of your functional capacity. Things like how well you are able to function at home and in the community, as well as the overall impact your disability has on your life.

When you need an independent assessment, we will refer you to an independent assessor, who will organise a time with you. Some assessments might need input from your parent/guardian or nominee.

You can choose to have your assessment done at a place that suits you, or by video call if you have an appropriate internet connection and device - like a tablet or computer with a camera.

Your assessment will be free. The assessment will take around 3 hours. You can choose to do the assessment in the way that best suits you, like on the same day, or over a number of days.

You can have someone with you when you do your assessment, like a family member or support worker.

The assessor will ask you questions about your life and what matters to you, and ask to see how you approach some everyday tasks. They will work through some standardised assessment tools with you, based on your age or disability.

The results of your independent assessment will be sent to us when it's done, and your planner or LAC will talk to you about your results in your planning meeting. Your independent assessment will be used to identify possible supports and your NDIS budget.

You can request a copy of your independent assessment for your records.

If you're a new participant

By mid 2021, independent assessments will be part of the access process.

Once you have submitted your access request form, we will review it to see if you meet the age, residency and permanent criteria to access the NDIS.

If you meet the basic access criteria, we'll refer you to an independent assessor in your area, who will work with you to arrange a time for your assessment.

Not all people with a permanent disability are eligible for the NDIS. Independent assessments will help determine the significance of a person's disability to help the NDIA make fair and consistent decisions on who is eligible for the Scheme.

If you don't meet the NDIS access criteria, we will provide you with details of a Local Area Coordinator or Early Childhood partner, who will contact you about other supports in your area.

If you already have an NDIS plan

By the end of 2021, we will be using independent assessments as part of our normal plan review process with participants.

We will refer you for an independent assessment at important points, such as when you:

- are approaching a new life stage, for example starting school, or preparing to enter the workforce
- have a change of circumstances
- request a plan review
- have stable supports and would like a longer plan
- have supported independent living supports in your plan
- are having your NDIS access reassessed
- are preparing to transition out of the NDIS.

The NDIA will pay for your assessment.

Once you have had your assessment, we will contact you to talk about what happens next. In most cases, it will be the beginning of a plan review conversation.

If your independent assessment shows you no longer need the NDIS, the assessment will help show the gains you have made in your functional capacity. Information is already available for participants who are leaving the Scheme.

You can use your assessment as a starting point with your Local Area Coordinator, Early Childhood partner or heath professional when working out what supports you'd like after you leave the NDIS.

What if I disagree with my assessment?

If you don't agree with the decisions we make based on your independent assessment, you can ask for an internal review of a decision.

You can read more on the internal review of a decision at bit.ly/InternalRevisions.

5 Questions we wished they asked: the NDIA Planning Discussion Paper

By Sara Gingold, DSC

Late last year, the NDIA released their vision for a complete transformation of the NDIS planning process and asked us all for feedback. The proposed changes are outlined in the Planning Policy for Personalised Budgets and Plan Flexibility community consultation paper, which we covered in a previous article. At the risk of sounding overly dramatic, if these proposals become policy, they could fundamentally alter the NDIS as we know it. **Cue climactic music**

The deadline for submissions, 10 am on the 23rd of February, is fast approaching. With past discussion papers, DSC has tried to contribute to the public discourse with articles that address the questions the NDIA put to the community. The problem this time is that the questions are, well, pretty cringeworthy. For the most part, they completely side-step the integral issues at the heart of the paper. Instead of asking us the rather obvious question of whether we think what they are proposing is a good idea, we are treated to gems like this:

"How can we best support participants to transition to this new planning model?"

Kind of manipulative, right?

However, submissions do NOT have to stick to these questions. The NDIA says they *"welcome any feedback on the policy as it is outlined in this paper."* Therefore, it is officially open season.

To help fuel your thoughts, we jotted down some questions we wish they had asked.

QUESTION 1: WHAT DO PARTICIPANTS WANT TO GET OUT OF PLANNING MEETINGS?

Call me naïve, but if you want to re-design the planning process, this seems like a good question to kick things off.

The paper proposes the following process: people will receive a draft plan before their meetings. Drafts can only be altered for supports like SDA, home modifications or assistive technology or if the participant has complex support needs. Consequently, under the proposed model, the planning meeting itself would usually have no bearing on the overall plan budget. Instead, meetings would more closely resemble what we now consider plan implementation meetings, an opportunity for participants to discuss how they can spend their funds and what mainstream supports they can access.

Plan implementation discussions can be incredibly useful, particularly for participants new to the Scheme. But is this what participants primarily want out of planning meetings? If you don't ask, you won't know, but here's an educated guess: people value planning meetings as an opportunity to argue their case, explain their circumstances and connect on a human level with the person who is about to make decisions which will seriously impact their life. Very often, battles do not arise because everybody enters the meeting in a spirit of collaboration. Just in case something does go wrong, however, we have to give people the opportunity to stand up for what they are entitled to. And let's be real; we don't actually need to choose between a plan implementation meeting and a funding negotiation.

As the famous saying goes:

QUESTION 2: IT'S THE MULTI-BILLION-DOLLAR QUESTION; CAN THE RESULTS OF AN INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT BE USED TO DETERMINE SOMEONE'S FUNDING?

We've discussed the potential benefits and pitfalls of IAs to death on DSC's Resource Hub, so there is probably no point in covering old ground. However, a crucial piece of information that's missing from the consultation papers is how the NDIA plans to transform standardised test results into individualised plans, especially plans that take into account individual contexts, goals and all the complexities that come along with everyday life.

The bleakest proposition is that assessment scores will numerically correlate to specific levels of funding. We want to be absolutely clear: we have no evidence that this is what the NDIA has in mind. However, the Agency has also failed to present an alternative model that connects the assessments to funding.

When IAs were first announced, I imagined they would be just one piece of evidence that informs planning outcomes in the same way that practitioner and provider reports currently are. However, this model would still rely on planners interpreting the evidence and using it to make a subjective decision. It seems like subjectivity is exactly the thing that the NDIA would rather avoid. One of the key justifications for implementing IAs is the inconsistent decision making that has been a hallmark of the current planning model. And – no shit – it's a problem. But is a touch of inconsistency simply the price we have to pay for individualisation and leaving decisions in the hands of humans? Perhaps inconsistency is something the NDIA can (and should) work to mitigate but will never do away with entirely.

QUESTION 3: IF THE NDIA DOES REQUIRE PEOPLE TO UNDERGO IAS, HOW OFTEN IS REASONABLE?

The consultation paper currently suggests participants will be required to have an IA at least once every five years, with the minimum time between assessments being three months. However, this really feels like something that should be open for discussion. Talking about your disability and support needs with a complete stranger can be traumatic, not something you want to be doing on the regular. If the NDIA absolutely insists on making IAs compulsory, we need to have a conversation about how often is reasonable.

Moreover, the paper suggests that IAs will be required before plan reviews that result in a change to plan funding. The argument is that, if funding is linked to functional capacity, they need to assess a person's functioning before they can raise or lower funds. But there are many other reasons someone might request additional funding that have nothing to do with changes in capacity. For example, what if someone wants to go from working one day to two days a week? In such cases, wouldn't a simple planning conversation be enough?

QUESTION 4: SHOULD THE NDIA RELEASE FUNDING IN INTERVALS?

Under the proposal in the paper, participants would have their funding released at monthly or quarterly intervals. This seems to be linked to the move to longer plans, and there is certainly a case for it. If we were given our salaries in five-year intervals, most of us would be pretty overwhelmed and consequently do a shocking job of budgeting. But you must admit that it is kind of a patronising solution to the problem.

More importantly, there are significant risks that have not been adequately addressed. Notably, we do not know what will happen if people need to draw on additional funds because of the episodic nature of their disability or temporary changes in life circumstances. The proposed changes allow for unspent funds to roll over into the next payment interval, but not for overdrawing. Therefore, if a person is at the beginning of their plan or hasn't managed to save up from past payments, then it is not clear how easily they will be able to access additional funding.

To be fair, the paper does say, *"if additional funds are required in the first month of a plan, or a participant wants to make a bulk purchase, a higher initial allocation may be arranged and then be offset by smaller monthly allocations."* We are given no details about what the process for arranging for additional funds might look like, and it is possible that the NDIA will design a system that is quick and easy to use. But let's face it, *"quick and easy"* is not exactly what the NDIA is known for. And at times when participants need extra support for whatever reason, they don't want to be jumping through bureaucratic hoops.

QUESTION 5: HOW DO WE ENSURE PARTICIPANTS ARE FUNDED AT THE RIGHT LEVEL?

The NDIA asks a question that gets close but doesn't quite hit the mark:

How can we assure participants that their plan budgets are at the right level? (e.g. panels of the Independent Advisory Council that meet every six months to review learnings and suggest improvements)

So, I've edited it slightly:

How can we **ensure** *participants plan budgets are at the right level?*

What's the difference between "*assure*" and "*ensure*"? When you are working through caffeine brain trying to meet a deadline, it's easy to get them mixed up, but there is a world of difference between a system that seeks to *ensure* plans are fair and one than aims to assure people that plans are fair. The first is about establishing a system that actually works, while the second is about trying to build confidence in the system, without any particular regard for whether it does work.

Is ensuring plan budgets are at the right levels easy to do? Hell, no! But these are the real questions the Agency needs to grapple with; anything else is simply skirting the issue.

The problem with this consultation paper really comes down to the fact that you don't get the feeling the NDIA actually wants your input. It has the vibe of a tick-box consultation. But the fact they might not want feedback is no reason not to provide it. Starting today, you have 14 days to get your submission together. What are you waiting for?

Have your say: https://www.ndis.gov.au/community/have-your-say/planning-policy-personalised-budgets-and-plan-flexibility

Delivering the NDIS: maturing scheme continues to deliver during COVID-19

Media release from the Minister

17 February 2021

New data has revealed how the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) continued to support more Australians during 2020—a year full of unprecedented challenges from the devastating bushfires in January through to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Not only did the NDIS need to adapt to these challenges, it needed to support the NDIS community through a very stressful time. It achieved this by adding or refining supports available to participants and providers, improving outcomes for participants and growing the Scheme.

The data, drawn from the latest NDIS Quarterly Report (Q2 2020-21) released today, demonstrates not only has the NDIS adapted, it continued to deliver for people with disability.

With the complete picture for 2020 now available, the data shows:

- we welcomed an average of 24,800 people into the NDIS each quarter in 2020.
- we are now supporting over 430,000 people with disability, an increase of more than 93,500 participants since December 2019.
- the number of younger people in residential aged care has reduced by 22 per cent over the past two years.
- 100 per cent of access decisions are made within the 21 day timeframe. In June 2019 we were taking an average of 42 days to make an access decision.
- 98 per cent of first plans are approved for participants aged 0-6 within 90 days, compared to 85 per cent a year ago. For participants aged 7 and above, 92 per cent of first plans are approved within the 70 day timeframe, compared to 64 per cent a year ago.
- review timeframes have significantly improved with 100 per cent of decisions to undertake a participant requested review made within 21 days, compared to a year ago where 56 per cent of decisions to undertake a participant requested review were made within 21 days.
- on 1 July 2020, the NDIS was available nation-wide. After seven years of hard work, the Scheme became available to all Australians, a wonderful milestone to reach.

Equally critical to supporting participants achieve better outcomes is the continued development of an innovative, engaged provider sector.

In a recent provider sentiment survey, nearly 60 per cent of providers said they felt optimistic about the health of the NDIS market, an increase of 12 per cent from the previous survey in September 2019.

The provider market grew in 2020:

- providers were paid over $20 billion to deliver participant supports throughout 2020.
- averaged payments per participant increased by 9 per cent in 2020, from $47,800 to $52,300.
- registered providers grew by more than 12 per cent over the past year.

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> *“What I am looking for is not out there, it is in me.”*
>
> *– Helen Keller*

Delivering the NDIS

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- In 2020, the Scheme supported providers by:
- running thin market trials in various locations throughout Australia, to improve our approach to monitoring and identifying market challenges.
- releasing detailed Specialist Disability Accommodation data.

The report also shows the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) continued to deliver on its Participant Service Guarantee – which sets out clear timeframes participants can expect from the NDIA – meaning people with disability are enjoying faster access to supports.

Minister Robert said he was incredibly proud of how the NDIA has risen to the challenge of continuing to improve the Scheme whilst adapting to what was an incredibly challenging year.

'We will all remember 2020 as a year of challenge and change,' Minister Robert said.

'For the NDIS, it was the year of learning to adapt to an ever-changing environment whilst continuing to grow, supporting more Australians with disability than ever before.

'A key part of supporting growth was drawing on the strengths of the Scheme and actively looking at where it needed to improve. In 2020, we made extra time to listen to our participants and providers, consider our data and look for ways to make the Scheme better.

'The NDIS has now reached a significant stage, with a sharper focus on ensuring a better experience for every participant.

'Despite the challenges of COVID-19, we forged ahead to make the Scheme simpler, fairer and more consistent. The Scheme is now rolled out across Australia, and, after seven and a half years, we have a better understanding of how the Scheme is working and where improvements can be made. We are now focused on ensuring the Scheme delivers a consistent and high quality experience for all participants.'

CELEBRATING 40 • YEARS • OF SERVICE

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