

Tabled Document

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Witness: Robert De Luca

Organisation: DSS

CEO Opening Statement | Senate Estimates

Good morning Chair and Senators. Thank you for your welcome.

I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet today and pay my respect to their elders past and present.

It is an honour and privilege to appear before you as CEO of the National Disability Insurance Agency.

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The NDIS is now in its fourth year of operation. Our three year trial has ended, and we are 16 months into transition to full scheme. We've learned many valuable lessons along the way.

Since commencing as CEO, I have spent time meeting with people to learn about the challenges and opportunities we face.

The NDIA is a relatively young organisation. We have a large and complex task ahead of us with no template to follow. It is clear that we need to grow and evolve in order to deliver a world leading NDIS.

We have the benefit of a number of committee reviews, findings and recommendations. Many considered and constructive improvements have been proposed.

Last week, the Productivity Commission released their final report into Scheme Costs. The Agency welcomes the report, and I refer the Committee to the Statement we released in response to its findings.

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As outlined in our Corporate Plan, the NDIA is taking a structured approach to prioritising and implementing changes in order to have the greatest impact.

As agreed with our Board, our top priorities are:

1. Ensuring a quality experience and outcomes for participants;
2. Enabling a competitive market of innovative supports;
3. Delivering a high quality NDIA, with the right systems, processes, controls, reputation and capabilities; and
4. Monitoring and responding to costs pressures to ensure the NDIS remains financially sustainable.

I will now briefly address each priority.

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Participants are at the centre of everything we do and so our first priority is improving the experience and outcomes for participants.

So far the planning experience has not been consistently high quality for everyone:

- plans have not always been driven by goals and outcomes;
- participants have not always found it easy dealing with us, and;
- our connections with other service systems have not always been clear and straightforward.

Many areas where improvements are required have been highlighted by this Committee.

The Board and management have listened, and we are working to make significant improvements.

Following extensive consultation with stakeholders and consistent with recommendations from the *Joint Standing Committee Annual Progress Report*, on 18 October 2017 we announced a new participant pathway.

The new pathway experience will now be progressively tested and piloted before rolling out nationally.

There are a number of improvements that will be implemented immediately including that all planning meetings will be held face-to-face, or according to a participant's preference.

We have also begun development on a number of tailored pathways to ensure appropriate responses for all participants, including people with psychosocial disability, children, people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with more complex needs.

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A higher quality provider experience is also required. Our second priority is a competitive market of innovative supports where participant driven services are delivered through vibrant localised markets.

Providers are key partners in delivering the NDIS and I acknowledge their experience has been variable in the past. The new pathway experience for providers will see improvements over time including:

- clearer information and operational policy;
- straightforward ways for providers and participants to connect; and,
- an NDIS myplace portal and tools that are reliable and simple to use.

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The NDIA is growing rapidly, and in order to deliver the NDIS for all Australians, we must be a high-performing NDIA which is our third priority. A core focus for me as

CEO is to continue to develop and mature the NDIA's systems, processes, controls and capabilities.

The NDIA has been working with the Department of Human Services as our partner to improve our technology, systems and platforms to support full Scheme operations.

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The fourth priority of the Corporate Plan is the long-term financial sustainability of the Scheme.

The NDIA is an insurance scheme and an actuarial approach is central to our operations. We will continue to identify and respond to cost pressures. Some key initiatives underway include:

- a revised Early Childhood Early Intervention gateway to connect with and navigate other service systems and the community;
- increasing our risk-based assurance practices at access and plan approval; and,
- continuing to invest in our people and grow our capability.

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The NDIS is a part of a broader system of supports and services. Our legislation states that all supports must be reasonable and necessary, taking into account supports already available to a person including support from their family or other carers, or from other government service systems such as health, education and housing. These services must be accessible to people with disability.

The *National Disability Strategy* provides a framework for inclusive services and communities, and we must all do more work to realise its vision.

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The NDIS can only succeed and be sustainable when our communities, including our entire service system, is inclusive.

We must all work together to ensure we achieve inclusive communities and workplaces.

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I would like to thank this Committee, and the Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS, for your important work.

I am committed to continuing to build our relationship so that we can respond quickly and effectively when matters are raised, and invest in translating your work into a world leading NDIS.

Looking ahead to the next 12 months and the continued implementation of NDIS across the nation, the challenges can appear daunting – but the opportunities and the benefits of the NDIS outweigh the challenges many times over.

I am absolutely committed to building an NDIS that empowers people with disability to achieve their goals in inclusive communities and workplaces.

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Thank you Chair and Senators for the opportunity to make an opening statement. My colleagues and I look forward to your questions and comments.

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