



Australian Federation of Disability Organisations

**'STAY THE COURSE'**

Briefing to the Joint Standing Committee

*Blind Citizens Australia*

*Deaf Australia Inc*

*Deafness Forum of Australia*

*Physical Disability Australia*

*Disability Justice Advocacy*

*People with DisabilityWA*

*Australia for All alliance*

*Disability Resource Centre*

*Brain Injury Australia*

*Short Statured People of Australia*

*National Ethnic Disability Alliance*

The issue of NDIS cost and the capability of the National Disability Insurance Agency have been prominent in the media recently. The NDIA have developed an action plan in response to the recommendations, in our view this is the normal happenings of a significant reform and we should 'stay the course'.

The NDIS is a legacy project that repeals decades of segregation, institutionalisation and marginalisation of people with disability, as a result there will be regular and ongoing hurdles where the old system interfaces with the new.

The disability sector has been characterised by minimal levels of change and many reforms have really eventuated to a rebranding of old models. The effect has been a significant waste of resources over decades with the outcome being the progress of people with disability into our community has been painstakingly slow.

Australians broadly support the NDIS and what the scheme aims to achieve – it is important that we keep this momentum.

**Design Principles of the National Disability Insurance Scheme.**

Many of AFDO's constituents are some of the most vulnerable members of our society and to date have not been given a voice to make choices.

The design principles of the NDIS and the NDIA's willingness to operationalise them are a first in disability reforms in this country in that they protect and support that very fragile and vulnerable voice. In AFDO's view this is what transforms the NDIS into something aspirational and more than just an insurance scheme. It is imperative that these design principles remain at the heart of the Scheme's implementation, these are:

- Community Inclusion: Including people with a disability in the community
- Choice and control: Protecting the rights of people with disability to be at the centre of their own planning.
- Consultation with people with a disability: Ongoing dialogue with the disability community with two-way feedback

### Why is it hard?:

The NDIS is a major social reform which has the capacity to substantially benefit people with disability and Australian society but there will be a number of key challenges”

- Moving from segregation of people with disability to true community inclusion - while the NDIS signals a promise to move away from segregated thinking and approaches to community inclusion, there is a very real risk that ‘old system’ thinking will creep back in
- Deeply entrenched perceptions and beliefs about people with disability
- Dismantling the entire disability support services system and creating a new system
- Interface issues between the new system and the old one eg. NDIS Trial site in Tasmania and issues for young people with intellectual disability moving into employment pathways
- Huge need for capacity building of people with disability, carers and communities
- Recruiting a suitably qualified workforce
- Importance of maintaining bipartisan support over the long term

### Why might costs be running high?

AFDO’s view is that costs may decline in the long term because:

- Makes sense larger costs up front, most of the focus is currently around those with the greatest need
- There has been little growth funding in the states services for people with a disability budget in lieu of the NDIS
- We have an employment system at the moment that needs reform to assist people with disabilities into work.

The Capability Report has raised some concerns regarding the capacity of the NDIA to implement the NDIS.

AFDO’s response is:

- It is too early to come to conclusions about the capacity of the NDIA to implement the NDIS. We are nine months in to one of the most significant reforms of a generation which requires a long term approach, *2<sup>nd</sup> guessing the scheme every couple of months is not going to be helpful*. In AFDO’s view, we need to be careful that the debate doesn’t stray into the realms that ‘it may not work’ to, ‘and instead keep it as a constructive and transparent journey of making the NDIS something that every Australian will be proud of. It is to be expected that implementing a reform of this magnitude will highlight gaps and areas where further work and capability is required.
- The NDIA have done an admirable job in implementing NDIS so far. While capability concerns have been identified, these are not insurmountable challenges, with clear, objective recommendations made in the Review about how these concerns can be rectified.

### What the NDIA is doing well:

AFDO has had a number of discussions with the NDIA, in contrast to reforms of the past, we like what they are doing, in particular;

- Holding firm against the segregation of the old system *MS*
- Including people with disabilities every step of the way
- Recruiting people with a strong lived experience of disability (14% people with disability)