

NDIS Joint Standing Committee
Perth Hills Public Hearing
9 April 2015

Since 1981, People With Disabilities (WA) Inc (PWdWA) has been the peak disability consumer organisation representing the rights, needs and equity of all Western Australians with a physical, intellectual, psychiatric or sensory disability via individual and systemic advocacy.

PWdWA has been providing Individual Advocacy to people with disabilities and their families who are participants of the NDIS Perth Hills trial. We have supported people at meetings with planners, explore options, make informed decision and ensure that their voice is heard and their concerns are raised.

The feedback that we have received from people with disabilities and their families in regards to the NDIS is broad.

In our experience people with disabilities and their families are benefiting of the NDIS in the following ways:

- People with disability have more choice and flexibility in the ways they receive their support services. For example, people can choose when they get their support and for how long according to their needs. Services are designed by participants not by service providers.
- If hours of support are not used they can be accrued and use when needed. If a participant wants to save their community access hours to go on day trip, they can do it without restrictions.
- People with high and complex needs who had limited or no supports feel that they are finally given a chance to live the life that they want and be active participants of their community. For example, people that have been historically underfunded and were waiting years for funding, they now have access to the support and therapy services that they need according to their needs.
- The NDIS plan is driven by the person with a disability not by their service provider.
- The NDIS is empowering people with disabilities and their families by holding information sessions about topics related to the NDIS. People that have attended these sessions have a better understanding of the planning process and gives them chance to reflect on their needs.

Some of the areas for improvement are:

- People who are not registered need to be encouraged to have face-to-face meetings to understand the registration process. This first contact with NDIS should meet the needs of potential participants. We know that people can go to the NDIS office and have assistance there to have the forms completed, but we do not know if NDIS representatives can visit someone in their home to provide assistance and information in regards to the registration process. Our concern is that not everybody can go to the NDIS office, read the documentation sent by mail or have access to internet to look at the NDIS website and access their registration number. Therefore, we need this initial contact to respond to the diverse needs of people with disabilities.
- People that were part of the state system need to be informed of the differences between the state system and NDIS. We heard of people with disabilities and their families feeling confused through this transition process. For example, people need to know that they will no longer have Local Area Coordinator, they need to have an understanding of the difference between the role of a Local Area Coordinator and a NDIS planner, that their state funding will stop, they cannot do shared management, and the mobility allowance will stop. They also need to understand what NDIS will offer them to cover for what they are not getting anymore.
- People need to have explained to them the meaning of the NDIS terminology in their plan. For example, some people are struggling with terms such as 'fixed supports'. Even when the definition of fixed supports is in the plan, it is not in plain English.
- Having a separate account for transport could be confusing for some participants. We are wondering if people can be offered the choice of having a card that is directly link to the NDIS something like a smart rider.
- Some people have felt that they have been rushed to agree to their plan. The planning process can take months and the NDIS planners need to encourage people to take their time to develop their plan.
- After the first meeting with the planner, people will get plans that do not include all the support requested by the participant. If changes are made by the planner, participants do not receive an explanation for the changes.
- Providing quotes could be difficult for people with limited or no supports.
- People are given a hard copy of a list of registered service providers. They are also encouraged to look at the NDIS website. People could feel overwhelmed by this and would not know where to start. They may not know how to organise meetings with potential service providers and do not know what to ask when meeting with them. They also do not know how to choose the ones that they want to meet. We suggest that there should be a rating system available to the general public where people using services can rate and comment about their service provider.