

# Senate Estimates

## Community Affairs Committee – Budget Estimates Hearing Opening statement - 3 June 2024

Thank you Chair and committee for inviting us to appear today. I will make some brief opening comments.

On Wednesday 15 May, the Agency published its third quarterly report for 2023–24 on the NDIS website.

The report details a number of initiatives and the progress we are making to support almost 650,000 people, their families and their communities.

We are not only focused on our interactions with our participants and their supports, but also how we improve as an agency.

The Financial Sustainability Report for the March quarter shows Scheme expenses for the first nine months of the financial year were at \$30.9 billion. This remains 1.8 per cent higher than projections for June, but is a relative improvement of 0.1 per cent from the last quarter.

Nearly 43 per cent of participants in the scheme are aged now between 0 and 14 years old.

The average payment per participant for the 9 months to March 2024 was lower than the previous quarter, down to 1.8% higher than expectations, an improvement from 2.1% in the December 2023 quarter.

The report shows green shoots in work to stabilise costs as a result of the implementation of \$732.9 million in Federal Government initiatives to improve outcomes for NDIS participants and the sustainability of the Scheme.

Plan inflation is down to 7.5% this quarter, the lowest rate since September 2021 and continuation of a downward trend observed since September 2022.

There has been a 14% reduction in the number of participants at risk of overspending their plan.

And the NDIA has observed a stabilisation in the number of participants new to Supported Independent Living.

From the end of 2023, the Agency received a significant increase in the volume of requests from participants seeking a change to their NDIS plan.

This has had a negative impact on the Agency's capacity to meet Participant Service Guarantee time frames over the recent quarter.

The Agency apologises for delays and is working diligently to improve wait times and to respond as quickly as possible to increased volumes.

A six-month remediation plan is underway that prioritises first plans, unscheduled reassessments and targeted scheduled reassessments.

This has included a multi-faceted approach which has included establishing a dedicated team to prioritise urgent plan reviews, recruiting more planners and 149 additional National Call Centre staff. We are also making enhancements to our computer system to improve efficiencies and participants' experience, among other measures.

While the Agency continues to facilitate vital support for many across the country, we know that we need to improve performance for others.

The NDIA recognises genuine change is needed to ensure the NDIS works for all people with disability and is working to make that happen.

The NDIA's work will also respond to recommendations and outcomes from the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability and the NDIS Review.

Many of the ideas about how to make the NDIS stronger have come from the disability community.

The NDIA has established and is delivering a co-design program across key initiatives to improve outcomes for participants including the participant pathway, participant safety, services and support for children on the NDIS.

In January, the NDIA established the Office of Agency Accessibility and Inclusion. This office is dedicated to driving a culture of accessibility and inclusion within the NDIA.

The Office will improve the accessibility of Agency systems, processes and supports for staff to continue building a more inclusive culture. It is part of the Agency's commitment to be an employer of choice for people with disability.

Thank you again for the invitation today.