

Chapter 1

Introduction

Referral of inquiry and terms of reference

1.1 The Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) was established on 1 September 2016. The committee is composed of five members and five senators.

1.2 The committee is tasked with inquiring into:

- (a) the implementation, performance and governance of the NDIS;
- (b) the administration and expenditure of the NDIS; and
- (c) such other matters in relation to the NDIS as may be referred to it by either House of the Parliament.

1.3 After 30 June each year, the committee is required to present an annual report to the Parliament on the activities of the committee during the year, in addition to other reports on any other matters it considers relevant.

1.4 The committee is also able to inquire into specific aspects of the Scheme. On 15 August 2018, the committee decided to undertake an inquiry into the ICT infrastructure employed by the NDIA, with particular reference to:

- (a) participant and provider experiences of the MyPlace Portal;
- (b) the impact of the role of other Government agencies on the ICT infrastructure;
- (c) the appropriateness of the MyPlace Portal and agency facing IT systems;
- (d) the impact of ICT infrastructure on the implementation of the NDIS; and
- (e) any other related matters

Structure of the report

1.5 This report is comprised of two chapters, as follows:

- Chapter 1 outlines the administration and context of the inquiry and provides some background information about the NDIS ICT infrastructure; and
- Chapter 2 examines two key functions of NDIS ICT systems essential to the efficient implementation of the Scheme: the enabling of effective communication and provision of information, and the facilitation of business transactions.

Conduct of the inquiry

1.6 The committee received 31 submissions to the inquiry from individuals and organisations. These submissions are listed in Appendix 1.

1.7 Submissions and answers to questions on notice are available on the committee's website.

Note on terminology and references

1.8 References to submissions in this report are to individual submissions received by the committee and published on the committee's website.

Acknowledgments

1.9 The committee would like to thank the individuals and organisations that made written submissions to this inquiry. We are grateful for their time and expertise.

Background information

Development of the ICT system

1.10 From 2013 to 30 June 2016, during the NDIS trials, the NDIS was supported by an interim Siebel based ICT system managed by the Department of Social Services (DSS). The system was designed to support around 30 000 participants and not easily scalable to support the full scheme.¹

1.11 From 2015–16, the Australian Government committed \$143 million over four years to develop a new system, with the Department of Human Services (DHS) managing its implementation and integration. DHS was established as the systems integrator to the NDIA for both initial capability development and ongoing operational management of ICT services.²

1.12 The NDIA, in co-operation with DHS and DSS, developed the new ICT system which is expected to support approximately 460 000 participants and 20 million payment transactions per annum at full Scheme.³

1.13 Given the compressed timeframe to support initial build activities, DHS delivered a Minimal Viable Product (MVP) consistent with global industry practice.⁴ According to DHS, the system was built and tested to specification and no technical issues were identified with the system at full scheme launch.⁵

1.14 The new system was implemented from 1 July 2016 to coincide with the transition to full Scheme. The old portal closed on 16 June 2016 in preparation for the transition, and participants and providers were unable to make payments until the new portal, known as 'MyPlace', went live.⁶

1 ANAO, *NDIS – Management of Transition of the Disability Services Market*, Audit Report No. 24, 2016–17, p. 69.

2 Department of Human Services, *Submission 21*, p. 2.

3 ANAO, *NDIS – Management of Transition of the Disability Services Market*, Audit Report No. 24, 2016–17, p. 69.

4 Department of Human Services, *Submission 21*, p. 2.

5 DHS, *Submission 21*, p. 2.

6 ANAO, *NDIS – Management of Transition of the Disability Services Market*, Audit Report No. 24, 2016–17, p. 69.

Issues with MyPlace portal implementation

1.15 On 1 July 2016, the NDIA launched MyPlace Portal, which is designed as the main interface between participants and providers and the NDIA.

1.16 The MyPlace participant and provider portals are secure websites developed to facilitate access to information, exchange of information and business transactions between participants, providers and the NDIA.

1.17 As soon as MyPlace went live, issues were being reported with the system—most importantly, the inability to process claims for payment.⁷

1.18 On 5 August 2016, the Minister for Social Services announced an independent review of the implementation of MyPlace Portal 'to determine how and why the problems arose so we can be confident that they will not reoccur'.⁸

1.19 In August 2016, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) conducted the independent review, which concluded that 'the root cause of payment failure was not a single catastrophic event, but rather a series of compounding issues which prevented a viable option to delay ICT implementation'.⁹

1.20 PwC made six recommendations to address identified issues with implementing the MyPlace portal. The recommendations focus on continual quality improvements as more participants transition to the Scheme.¹⁰

1.21 In December 2016, the COAG Disability Reform Council noted that the issues experienced by participants and providers in implementing the new MyPlace portal had been largely resolved and that users of the MyPlace portal reported a significantly improved experience.¹¹

1.22 However, as discussed in the committee's Progress Report in 2017, participants and service providers continued to experience issues with the portal after this time.¹²

7 The Hon. Christian Porter MP, Minister for Social Services, and the Hon. Jane Prentice MP, Assistant Minister for Social Services and Disability Services, 'Review of the Implementation of the NDIS MyPlace Portal', *Media release*, 5 August 2016.

8 The Hon. Christian Porter MP, Minister for Social Services, and the Hon. Jane Prentice MP, Assistant Minister for Social Services and Disability Services, 'Review of the Implementation of the NDIS MyPlace Portal', *Media release*, 5 August 2016.

9 PricewaterhouseCoopers, *NDIS MyPlace Portal Implementation Review – Final Report*, 31 August 2016, p. 2.

10 PricewaterhouseCoopers, *NDIS MyPlace Portal Implementation Review – Final Report*, 31 August 2016, p. 2.

11 Disability Reform Council, *Communiqué*, 5 December 2016, p. 1.

12 Joint Committee on the NDIS, *Progress Report*, 7 September 2017, pp. 66–68.

Pathway Review

1.23 In April 2017, the NDIA announced a Pathway Review in response to feedback from participants and providers that their experience with the NDIS was not meeting expectations.¹³

1.24 The review found that the portal was difficult to navigate, lacked vital features, was slow to process, did not facilitate payments easily, and created excessive administrative burden.¹⁴

1.25 The NDIA committed improvements to the ICT systems, including updates to the participant and provider portals and NDIS website to make the experience of engaging with the NDIS clearer, simpler, and more intuitive.¹⁵

1.26 According to the NDIA, since mid-2017, changes and improvements to the portal have regularly occurred and key programs are still underway to improve systems.¹⁶

13 NDIA, *The NDIS pathway experience*, <https://www.ndis.gov.au/pathways-experience> (accessed 15 November 2018)

14 NDIA, *Improving the NDIS Participants and Provider Experience*, 26 February 2018, pp. 4, 18–33.

15 NDIA, *The NDIS pathway experience*, <https://www.ndis.gov.au/pathways-experience> (accessed 15 November 2018)

16 NDIA, *Submission 24*, pp. 10–11.