

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
SOCIAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO
2017-2018 Budget Estimates Hearings

Outcome: National Disability Insurance Agency

Question No: NDIA SQ17-000143

Topic: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce

Hansard Page: Written

Senator McCarthy, asked:

What work is the NDIA doing to specifically support the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disability workforce in the NDIS setting? That is, not just within the NDIA itself, but the disability workforce who will be required to work with clients of the NDIS.

Answer:

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) is committed to building the economic and social participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) peoples through the delivery of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). This involves working closely with communities and established ATSI networks to develop local solutions to local service delivery challenges.

The NDIA directly employs a number of ATSI peoples in various roles across the NDIA. The NDIA has engaged a number of locally employed 'Community Connectors' across several Indigenous communities in East Arnhem. The role of the local Community Connectors is to help raise awareness of the NDIS and assist community members' access and navigate the NDIS. The NDIA has also funded a project in the Barkly region that has resulted in local Aboriginal people completing an accredited training program designed to lead to employment in the disability sector in very remote communities.

The NDIA is engaged in two entry level programs for ATSI peoples. These programs are the Indigenous Australia Government Development Program provided by the Department of Education and Training and the Indigenous Apprenticeship Program provided by Department of Human Services. Both programs provide a great opportunity to begin a career in the public sector, equipping participants with a nationally recognised Diploma, practical on-the-job experience, and will broaden their future employment and academic opportunities.

Maximising the employment of local ATSI people is central to the manner in which the NDIS is being implemented in the East Arnhem area. In East Arnhem we are taking a community by community approach to work with Traditional Owners, Community Elders and other key decision makers in each community to deliver the NDIS in a culturally respectful way. The NDIA works with the community to identify local people who may be interested to start up a new business or to expand an existing service to meet service gaps that emerge. Local solutions are identified to maximise the economic (and social) participation of the community.

The NDIA is also partnering with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to take a similar approach to other communities across Australia – including in areas such as Ceduna (South Australia). This will soon be followed by Doomagee and Mornington (Queensland) as well as the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands (South Australia) and Western Sydney.

The NDIA is continuing to explore a range of ways to deliver services, including working with ATSI community controlled organisations to ensure they are able to take up and increase service delivery in a range of capacities.

The NDIA is also collaborating with other government departments through the NDIS Indigenous Cross Portfolio Working Group on a range of activities, including a focus on economic participation.