

NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME (NDIS) COSTS

About Women with Disabilities Victoria

Women with Disabilities Victoria (WDV) is an organisation run by women with disabilities for women with disabilities. Our members, board and staff live across the state and have a range of disabilities, backgrounds, lifestyles and ages. Our mission is to improve women's choices by being a voice for women with disabilities, building partnerships and educating service sectors and the community.

WDV undertakes research, consultation and systemic advocacy. We also provide professional education, representation, information, and leadership programs for women with disabilities. Our gender perspective allows us to focus on areas of particular inequity to women with disabilities including access to women's health services and safety from gender-based violence. In this time of rapid change to disability services, we are also working to ensure that the NDIS is responsive to women with disabilities.

Thank you for this timely opportunity to comment on costs of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Transition is an important phase in development of the Scheme, presenting an opportunity to adapt and respond to issues that are emerging as roll out progresses. While WDV understands that the focus of the inquiry is on the cost of the NDIS, it is clear that this includes attention to the real benefits offered by the Scheme and the outcomes produced for individuals. This is our focus.

1. Funding and sustainability

Recognising that the NDIS is designed as an insurance model means acknowledging that the Scheme requires a serious investment from a guaranteed fund. Precarious funding, particularly in these early stages, risks compromising the Scheme in future by providing inadequate resources. Unreasonably tight targeting of funds may lead to compromise in key elements of the Scheme, including prevention, early intervention and recovery models.

As a result, WDV would strongly support a structure, such as a levy, that secures the sustainability of the NDIS for all Australians and reduces costs over the longer term.

2. Targeted spending

Funding of individual support packages is perhaps the most well-known element of the NDIS. However, the Scheme rests on a series of assumptions about the rights and entitlements of all people to access mainstream services in health, transport, housing and education. Recognising that this access is not always as it should be, it is extremely important to allocate significant funding to elements of the NDIS that do not relate to individual support packages. In particular the Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) stream of the NDIS has enormous potential to open access to mainstream services and build the capacity of communities to include people with disabilities. The pace of ILC funding is lagging and requires rapid acceleration.

At present, WDV understands that the Partners in the Community (or Local Area Coordination) role is primarily occupied with planning and on-boarding, with minimal capacity to work on capacity building with community and mainstream services. This increases the risk of overreliance on the scheme and reduces opportunities for inclusion in the ordinary life of the local community, especially for those deemed ineligible for an individual support package.

3. Adequate resourcing for women

WDV has a concern around the identification and response to participants with complex needs. A particular concern that we have is that skill in planning is required to identify and respond to family and other forms of violence against people with disabilities in general and women with disabilities in particular. In most cases, this will require more complex case planning to engage with family violence services and supports. This needs to be recognised as complex care planning and costed accordingly. Restreaming should be provided and the specific needs of women must be costed.

4. Interface with mainstream services

In order to include women with disabilities, mainstream services such as family violence and sexual assault must recognise their responsibilities to offer a response to the whole population and must make provision for services to women with disabilities. The Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence recommended a crisis package of disability supports to ensure safety through a period of crisis. The Victorian DHHS Disability Family Crisis Response Initiative presents a model for women and children receiving support through a CASA. Such crisis funding must be flexible, immediately accessible and provide for funding to cover specific equipment to meet needs.

5. Gender of participants

WDV is concerned about the data emerging around the gender split of participants (NDIS, COAG Disability Reform Council, Quarterly Report January 2017). We assume that the NDIA are tracking monitoring and responding to this throughout transition to ensure equity of access to the scheme and to consider gender differences in diagnosis and evidence of disability. WDV also notes that the NDIA needs to be tracking and monitoring and responding to similar issues around CALD and ATSI participants and the intersections of cultural and language background with gender.

A Scheme that properly identifies and responds to the needs of women, making provision for proper costing of that response, is necessary to ensure that women with disabilities can live an ordinary life. This includes costing the role as women with disabilities' caring responsibilities and the additional costs that will be involved in assisting women to achieve their goals as care providers.

Ensuring that community and mainstream services include women with disabilities is essential for the long term success of the scheme. To achieve such inclusion requires significant funding in the early stages of the scheme to build mainstream capacity but will clearly reduce costs to the scheme over the longer term as well as contributing to a more inclusive society.

Should the Commission require further information on any of these points, WDV would be pleased to expand on any matters raised in this submission.