

I am an experienced, masters qualified disability 'practitioner'. My work has always been with skill building for PWD and their families, with the aim for them to have as full a life as people without a disability. Sounds like exactly the person the NDIS is after, right?

No.

In NSW you can't be registered as a new provider for almost every registration group without paying thousands (\$4000 min) for a Third Party Verification. Providers that existed prior to NDIS rollout were offered funding to go through this process - new providers have no access to this. TPV does not ask whether you are skilled or experienced at what you do, it examines processes and measures your organisation against a set of 'standards'. Not only is it expensive, but does nothing to protect people or ensure the work you do is good. Beyond this, information about verifiers was incorrect. The response to one email I sent to someone on the list of approved verifiers was 'I have no idea what you are talking about, we don't do that kind of thing'. Of the 10 verifiers on the list only 5 responded, of those only 3 gave quotes. None were able to start work before 6 months into the future.

So, I go with the only thing I CAN register for without TPV - Plan Management. Not really my thing, but doing what I can to assist families with this in their budget to have their needs met.

There is no training manual, no workshops to attend, an advice line where the most common response to your question is "hold on, I'll just look at the guide" (the same guide I see that does not have the answers). Emails with questions are largely ignored, emails with complaints almost always ignored. They say they will get the tech support team to call you, the team don't call. The portal has lots of issues - sometimes they tell you in advance - often the first you know about an issue is when you login. Or, another provider on a Facebook forum talks about it.

You need insurance, a couple of types, working with children checks, police checks, business name, ABN, bank accounts etc - standard setting up business stuff, sure. Fine, if the promises about the potential for actually earning enough to feed your family came to reality. The over reliance on NDIA managed plans, the over reliance on large organisations to do capacity building work, the over reliance on skanky 'information sessions' (with bad biscuits!) in stinky clubs ....

It's not been fun.

I am also the sibling of a woman with disability. I soldier on, I try to be positive (while not diminishing the negative experiences of others) - BECAUSE I WANT THIS THING TO WORK! I want there to be better options and empowerment for people with disability, I want there to be more independent service provision. I like small, I think small is good.

Not sure how much longer I can soldier on for. This year my business will make a loss, probably in the region of \$4000 - \$5000. Essentially my business (and I believe other small businesses) has propped up the NDIA by doing necessary work, that people need, for free. I know of advocates with full time jobs doing pro bono work with very distressed people who have no other support. Parents who are already over loaded with protecting their own kids voluntarily managing social media accounts, with participants or potential participants who are at risk of suicide, small providers doing what they believe is right by donating their time to assist people who have had every 'door' they approach close in their face. This would maybe be Ok, except the NDIS involves so many restrictions and changing information that is difficult to earn enough income to live on. Lucky my husband has a job - and I have another business.

Today I feel like this is the last straw. I have had 2 plans referred to me in recent weeks, with significantly reduced Plan Management budgets. One entire line item, the item that allows me to be paid 1 hour (yep, 1) per month (yep, per month: 15 minutes per week). I have been using this

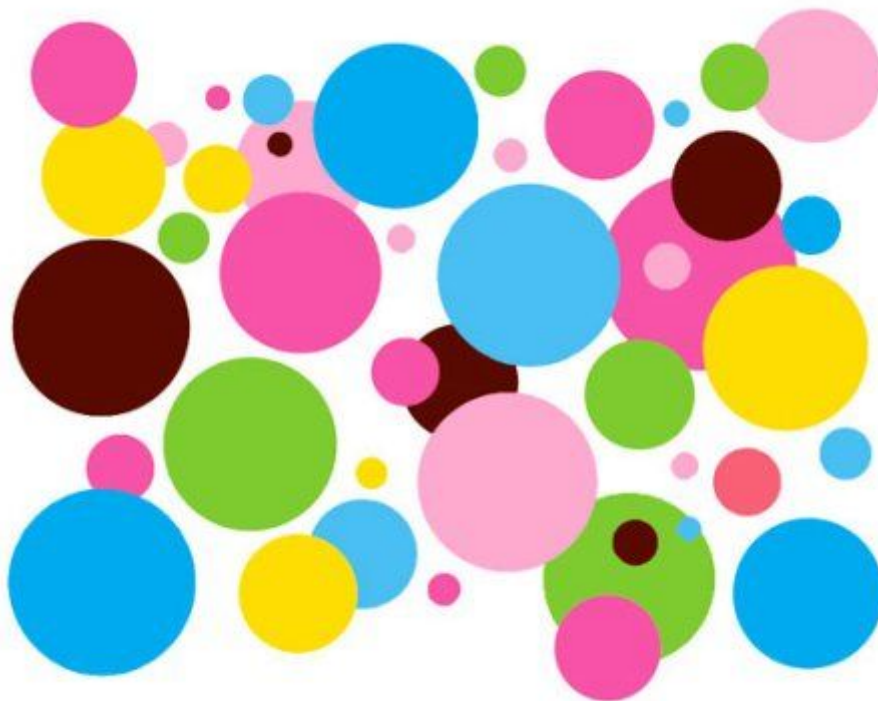
to pay myself to receive invoices from a participants provider, request funds from the generally slow portal, and then pay those funds to the supplier. Obviously at 1 hour this wasn't enough for the month.

The new plans; they don't have this line item in them at all. They include 4 hours to setup the arrangement with the participant (not enough time often, but I've been sucking it up). Then 1.5 hours per month to prepare a monthly financial report BUT NOTHING MORE. By example: for one of my participants that would be \$96.25 in total for a month to process 10-20 invoices. \$24.06 per week. I can earn more stacking shelves at Coles.

Plan Management was helping people to feel like they can stay afloat in this NDIS sea of change and mismanagement. Forget the capacity building, anxiety reducing work I was doing with participants, I now can't even receive and pay their invoices. Unless I do it for free.

And so; small providers - even middle sized providers - are refusing to become involved with the NDIA or just not taking on work. Small providers are being absorbed by big providers. And we end up with a large, cumbersome, not user friendly system that meets its own needs, but not the needs of participants.

My worry is that rather than this:



We will end up with this:

NDIS



LACs



Large organisations