

WA NDIS Trials Evaluation



2016

FINAL REPORT Executive Summary

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Final Report

Executive Summary and Recommendations

Purpose

This report presents the key recommendations of the evaluation of the two trials of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) in Western Australia - the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) trial in the Perth Hills region and the WA NDIS trial (formally My Way) managed by the Disability Services Commission WA (DSC) in the Lower South West and Cockburn Kwinana areas.

The evaluation has compared and contrasted the two models to assess the sustainability and effectiveness of the models, the experience for individuals and the outcomes for people with disability, their families and carers. Finally, the evaluation has sought to identify the implications for the future of the disability reform agenda in Western Australia and nationally.

It is important to note that the evaluation has been conducted during a period when neither trial site model is fully operational. The NDIA model and the WA NDIS model have been progressively implemented during the period July 2014 to June 2016.

The Evaluation has been undertaken using an industry standard “cross-functional business model” analysis, used to generate a comprehensive business model combining all the processes for both NDIA and WA NDIS operations in the WA trial sites. This approach is inherently independent of factors such as geographical, cohort and population levels and provides a sound basis for comparing the rules and practices of the two NDIS models in Western Australia.

The evaluation draws on multiple sources of information from public, government and trial site operations supported by workshops conducted with staff from the NDIA and WA NDIS, comprehensive surveys of over 69 Disability Service Providers with follow-up interviews, over 600 individual Participant Plans and 21 Participant detailed follow up interviews. The multiple data sources were used to validate the business model and form the basis of the recommendations of this report.

Delays experienced outside the control of the evaluation reduced the Participant conversation program and Providers survey. However, although the sample of Participants and Providers interviewed was small, consistency in the responses combined with the structured approach provided useful confirmation of trial site processes, practices and experiences that were not isolated or unrepresentative.

Executive Summary

There are many similarities between the two models that are being trialled in Western Australia. Both operate within the key nationally consistent parameters of the NDIS that is set out in the

Commonwealth legislation and rules. The NDIA trial site operates under the NDIS Act 2013 and the WA NDIS model operates under the Disability Services Act 2014 (Western Australia) that mirrors the relevant definitions and rules in the national legislation. The models therefore utilise common eligibility requirements and employ the same definition of “reasonable and necessary” supports. Most importantly both models use individual Participant Plans to enable maximum choice and control by individuals over their services.

The Participant Plan is fundamental to both models. All Participants have a Plan that embodies the agreement between the Participant and their respective trial site operator (agency). It describes their life, situation, personal goals, need for assistance and the unfunded and funded supports that are to be provided. The Plan has the central role in the description, funding and method of access to services and supports for an individual and their family.

The two models are derived from different start-points. The WA NDIS model is based on over 20 years of reform and refinement of a well-established base in WA whereas the NDIA model is newly developed to meet the specific needs of the NDIS at a national level. Both models are evolving and adapting to the roll-out of a new scheme.

The business model analysis, including comparison of the lifecycle of the Participant Plan under each model, clearly establishes the policy and practice differences between the trial site models and their respective evolutionary changes. Influencing factors related to implementation and ramp up in the trial sites have been excluded from the business model which reflect agency policies and practices as of July 2016. Given the progressive implementation of the trials and that a Participant Plan requires a year before review, comparative assessment of Participant outcomes was not viable.

The evaluation comprehensively analysed Participant Plan preparation, activation, operation and review processes and practices that accurately reflect the acceptance and effectiveness of Plan outcomes from the Participant’s and Provider’s perspectives. The dependency between the preparation of the Plan, its quality and accuracy, and the subsequent activation and delivery of the services clearly impact Participant satisfaction, experiences and their Plan outcomes.

Plan quality was confirmed in the surveys, interviews and observations to be closely correlated to the outcomes for people with disability, their families and carers. Whilst a good Plan improves the likelihood, it is not a guarantee of a good outcome for a Participant. Conversely, a poor Plan causes negative impacts on Participants, their families, Providers and agency operations. Thus Plan quality is regarded as a strong indicator of a good Participant outcome.

The use of performance indicators based on compliance with “Norms” was observed to compromise “*Reasonable and Necessary*” criteria and objectives for “*Individualised Assessment*” and to lead to “standardisation” of a Participant’s disability assessment, less effective planning of support services and Participant dissatisfaction with their Plan.

Each report recommendation is identified as requiring changes to either policy or process for each trial model. Changes to trial model policy are expected to require more agency investment and

lead time than improvements to operational practices. Where the recommendation is “In Place”, benefits may be expected from additional process improvements.

The key recommendations address gaps in either or both trial models necessary to meet the core requirements of future disability reform in WA. These core requirements are:

- A sustainable and effective service model, able to meet diversity, intensity, disability, location and volume of demand;
- A positive service experience for individuals, able to effectively assist individuals and their families engage with supports from community, mainstream and disability services;
- Optimal outcomes for people with disability, providing individuals, their families and carers responsive choice and control, safeguards against vulnerability and contribute to their life goals; and
- Address implications of future disability reform in Western Australia, ensuring the capacity to scale up to state-wide services, while maintaining effective quality management of Plans, services and operations and nurturing a capable and competent disability services sector to meet demand.

Key Features of an Effective Model for WA

The evaluation has identified five key features of an effective model for future disability reform in WA. These are not unique to WA and may be considered relevant for wider national application of the NDIS.

The five key features with associated key recommendations are:

1. Effective engagement of all parties involved in supporting an individual. A strong and collaborative relationship between the agency, Participant and Providers is essential for achievement of a quality Plan and successful outcomes for people with disability, their families and carers.

Key Rec#	Recommendation	Action		Section Ref
		WA NDIS	NDIA	
KR-1	Early engagement of Providers in Plan development and services commitment is to form part of the ongoing WA model.	In Place	Policy Change	3.4.A
KR-2	Promote full three-way engagement between the Planner/Coordinator, Participant and Provider to ensure maximum service value, minimal operational overheads and optimal Plan outcomes.	In Place	Process Change	4.2.C
KR-3	Implement and maintain a robust and sustainable, decentralised and scalable communication and relationship process involving Participants, their Providers and the agency.	In Place	Policy Change	4.3.B

2. Effective choice and control for the participant over their services whilst safeguarding the vulnerability of the individual. Active monitoring by the operating agency with responsive support at all times including flexible Plan adjustment for changing circumstances.

Key Rec#	Recommendation	Action		Section Ref
		WA NDIS	NDIA	
KR-4	Ensure processes are in place to provide prompt response, negotiation, resolution of issues and safeguarding vulnerabilities of Participants during Plan operation.	In Place	Process Change	3.6.A
KR-5	Implement processes that support "rolling" adjustments for service and Provider changes to a Plan during operation, together with greater flexibility in setting Plan review periods.	Policy Change	Process Change	3.7.A
KR-6	Enable responsive access to agency and Provider support, operational flexibility and adaptability of Plans in order to enable and maintain ongoing, responsive Participant choice and control.	Policy Change	Process Change	4.3.A

3. Accurate assessment of Participant needs with service descriptions and funding agreed by all parties. Ensure prompt service delivery, lowest operational overheads and optimal value from the investment in Participant supports.

Key Rec#	Recommendation	Action		Section Ref
		WA NDIS	NDIA	
KR-7	The viability of all funded services in a Plan is to be proven prior to approval.	In Place	Policy Change	3.4.B
KR-8	The activation of Provider services, following Plan endorsement, is to incur a minimal delay in Participant access to supports.	In Place	Process Change	3.5.C
KR-9	Implement processes to ensure all committed services in a Plan are effectively and fully delivered to the Participant with appropriate incentives and monitoring procedures.	In Place	Policy Change	3.6.C

4. Capable and sustainable disability services sector able to meet the demands of a state-wide rollout of the NDIS scheme. Agreed service price baselines (for WA) with capacity to negotiate individual needs and supports.

Key Rec#	Recommendation	Action		Section Ref
		WA NDIS	NDIA	
KR-10	Engage with the WA disability services sector to ensure adequate availability and capacity of services for WA rollout and a healthy relationship that fosters good-will and cooperation.	In Place	Process Change	4.1.A
KR-11	Adopt an "open pricing" approach whereby price book components are negotiated in an open industry consultation process, inclusive of WA.	In Place	Process Change	4.1.D

5. Efficient and reliable financial management of service costing and delivery. A sound financial operational system accessible by Providers and Participants.

Key Rec#	Recommendation	Action		Section Ref
		WA NDIS	NDIA	
KR-12	Ensure a reliable, functional, scalable and sustainable financial system is implemented.	Process Change	Process Change	4.3.E

The degree of change required by the respective trial models to comply with the key features of an effective model for future disability reform in WA is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 – Summary of Key Recommendation Action Types

Action Type	WA NDIS	NDIA
Policy Change Required	2	4
Process Change Required	1	8
In place (No Action)	9	0
Total Key Recommendations	12	

The WA NDIS model is the closest fit to the key features of an effective model for WA, requiring the least modification. However, the WA NDIS model needs to continue to change and evolve in addition to adoption of the two key recommendation policy changes and a process change.

General Recommendations

These general recommendations include enhancement of positive elements of both the NDIA and WA NDIS models that will contribute to further improvement of the delivery and operation of disability reform in WA.

General Rec#	Recommendation	Action		Section Ref
		WA NDIS	NDIA	
GR-01	Performance indicators used to monitor Plan quality are to reinforce the primary purpose of a Plan and not promote conformity.	Process Change	Process Change	3.4.C
GR-02	Endorsement of all Plans and changes to Plans to require signed acceptance by the Participant.	In Place	Process Change	3.5.A
GR-03	Version control and endorsement of new and modified Plans to meet applicable (state) government document management standards.	In Place	Process Change	3.5.B
GR-04	Self-Managed Participants are to have explicit provision for employment liabilities (superannuation, worker's compensation) in the Plan and procedures are to be in place to ensure that responsibilities have been effectively communicated to the Participant.	In Place	Process Change	3.5.D
GR-05	Participants granting Provider access to their service category accounts is to be controlled so that budget and service claim management processes meet accepted financial standards.	Not Applicable	Process Change	3.5.E
GR-06	Compare Provider - Participant service agreements with the corresponding Plan service descriptions and budgets to identify variations affecting the value of services.	Process Change	Policy Change	3.6.B
GR-07	Payment of Participant expense claims to be prompt and effectively escalated for issue resolution as required and provide accessible and up-to-date account status.	Process Change	Process Change	3.6.D
GR-08	Payment of Providers for services to be timely with effective escalation and negotiation procedures for issue resolution, including effective means of monitoring and managing allocated Participant accounts.	In Place	Process Change	3.6.E
GR-09	Implement processes to ensure continuity of Participant funded services during the period between Plan expiry and the replacement Plan commencement	In Place	Policy Change	3.7.B
GR-10	Implement processes to facilitate synchronisation of Participant Plan service budgets with corresponding accounts used for processing claims from the Participant and their Providers.	In Place	Process Change	3.7.C
GR-11	Establish negotiation and escalation procedures for resolution of marginal viability of services to ensure continued access to vulnerable service categories.	In Place	Process Change	4.1.B
GR-12	Group homes accommodation support pricing, support grades and facility allowances be negotiated for a sustainable future. <i>(Currently under active negotiation between commonwealth and state governments)</i>	In Place	Process Change	4.1.C

General Rec#	Recommendation	Action		Section Ref
		WA NDIS	NDIA	
GR-13	Maintain an active presence in monitoring Participant and community trends on-line to ensure responsiveness to changing needs and attitudes.	In Place	In Place	4.2.A
GR-14	Adopt a pro-active agency program for Participant relationship development that monitors trends in Participant's perception of service value, Plan satisfaction, Provider interaction and agency support.	Process Change	Process Change	4.2.B
GR-15	Implement a program to address Participant concerns and minimise anxiety regarding their ongoing dependency on continuity of NDIS based supports.	Process Change	Process Change	4.3.C
GR-16	Implement Plan development processes aimed at measurable Plan quality improvements delivering optimised service value with reduced Plan operational issues and support overheads.	Process Change	Process Change	4.3.D
GR-17	Reassess existing Performance Indicators to provide greater emphasis on measuring viability of services, achievement of reasonable and necessary criteria, individualised funding, and responsiveness to Participant choice and control.	Process Change	Process Change	4.3.F
GR-18	Performance measures be put in place to reward Plan development for achieving robust, viable and accurate Plans.	Process Change	Process Change	4.3.G
GR-19	Resolve any legal issues with respect to tax liabilities for proxy/guardian receiving funds on behalf of Participants.	Policy Change	Policy Change	3.6.F

The degree of change required by the respective trial models to implement the recommended improvements into the effective model for future disability reform in WA is summarised in Table 2.

Table 2 – Summary of General Recommendation Action Types

Action Type	WA NDIS	NDIA
Policy Change Required	1	3
Process Change Required	8	15
In place (No Action)	9	1
Not Applicable	1	0
Total Recommendations	19	

Further improvement of the delivery and operation of disability reform in WA by either model will benefit from change and evolution and adoption of these general recommendations.

The WA NDIS model requires fewer modifications with one of the recommendations requiring a policy change, eight requiring process improvement and nine requiring no action. The NDIA model requires three policy changes and fifteen process improvements.