



Western Australia and the National Disability Insurance Scheme: Overview

In August 2011, the Productivity Commission **Disability Care and Support** report found that the national disability system was unfair, fragmented and underfunded. In the same month, all Australian Governments through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed on the need for the reform of disability services through a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

The Western Australian Government has consistently emphasised the importance of people having the same access to disability services across Australia (national consistency) and being able to move around Australia without losing services and supports (portability). Importantly, an appropriately funded NDIS can ensure that people with disability, their families and carers would get the support they need when they need it. Despite significant increases in State Government funding for disability services and the highest levels of disability services spending per person across Australia, many Western Australians miss out on the disability services they need.

In April 2012, COAG reaffirmed its commitment to the NDIS recognising that 70 percent of disability care and support services are currently funded by State Governments and that the national scheme should build upon existing services.

The Western Australian Government is committed to an NDIS and is actively involved in the process of making it a reality. It is estimated that the scheme will cost at least \$16 billion a year nationally (\$1.7 billion in Western Australia). The Western Australian Government supports the Productivity Commission's recommendation that the Commonwealth should pay the additional cost of the scheme, as the State Government already pays for 83% of its current disability services.

The Western Australian Government also considers that the NDIS should build on the existing disability system in Western Australia, including Local Area Coordinators, individualised funding, and a strong disability services sector. This will ensure continuity for people with disability currently accessing services and supports. The Commonwealth Government's proposal that a new national agency take over responsibility for the system risks disrupting the services and supports people receive by reducing flexibility to local needs, changing the way service providers are funded and undermining established relationships.

Most of the key design features of the NDIS are still being developed. For example:

- **Who will be eligible to get support from the NDIS and what support will those people get?** Western Australia wants to ensure that people currently receiving support are not worse off under an NDIS. Public consultation on these issues will happen in September 2012.
- **How much choice and control people will have under an NDIS?** Western Australia is trying to ensure that people have as much choice and control as possible and that our experience with individualised funding and Local Area Coordinators is built upon in the NDIS.
- **How will the disability services sector be supported and developed under an NDIS?** Western Australia wants to ensure that people with disability, their families and carers have a genuine choice between reputable providers. This will mean designing the system to ensure the sustainability of a wide range of providers at a local level.
- **How will the scheme support people with disability in regional and remote areas?** Western Australia wants to ensure that the NDIS will be flexible and able to respond to the unique local circumstances of regional and remote areas. This may require additional local support to service providers to ensure that there are services for people with disability to access.
- **How will people with disability, their families and carers get access to supports and services under the NDIS?** Western Australia wants to ensure that people get advice and services from organisations and individuals they trust and who know their situation, such as Local Area Coordinators, support groups and existing service providers. It will also be important to encourage new, innovative service providers to emerge.
- **How will the scheme respond to people's changing needs?** Western Australia supports local decision making to allow a timely and flexible approach to meeting the needs of people with disability.
- **How will the scheme work for people with a psychiatric disability?** Whilst the existing State Government system for people with a psychiatric disability is less advanced than the disability services system, the State Government's mental health reforms are consistent with the direction of the NDIS. Western Australia supports an NDIS that is well integrated into the mainstream health and mental health system.

The Productivity Commission also recommended a smaller National Injury Insurance Scheme (NIIS) to support people who acquired their disability through catastrophic injury. The first stage of this Scheme will involve expanding compulsory third party car insurance. The Western Australian Government is currently considering its approach to an NIIS and intends to balance any expanded level of cover with an affordable insurance cost for households.

Further information on the NDIS is available at www.ndis.gov.au or http://www.disability.wa.gov.au/disability_reform/ndis.html