

Peak body urges government to get it right for Australians with disability

NDS has challenged the government to deliver on the benefits promised under the NDIS for the most vulnerable members of our community.

The recent announcement by Minister for Families and Social Services, Paul Fletcher, claiming the NDIS is having a real impact on the lives of people with disability is not telling the full story.

NDS CEO Chris Tanti says, “We campaigned strongly for the introduction of the NDIS and support the goal of quality support and choice for more Australians living with disability. However, the implementation of NDIS has been difficult and resulted in serious stress for a significant number of people living with disability, families and carers, and providers of services.”

Although 250,000 Australians are now receiving support under the NDIS, the government has conveniently not addressed the continuing and significant problems with the scheme.

“You only have to listen to people and providers of services to know this is not the full story. This isn’t a numbers game. It is not just about reaching the ‘bums on seats’ targets,” says Mr Tanti.

“This is about real choice, quality service provision, plans that make sense and are well funded, and review points that make sense. We are going to see more stress and pain for Australians with disability as the scheme ramps up and more people come on board; without the significant problems encountered on rollout being fixed”, he adds.

This is not what the architects of the scheme intended. Although teething problems were blamed for the inefficient NDIS systems and processes over the past year, some of the problems are not being fixed fast enough. Delays in payments exacerbate the pain.

“The situation is not sustainable. From our recent State of the Disability Sector report, we know 73 per cent of providers find NDIS systems and processes are simply not working.

“Providers of services under the NDIS are telling us it’s really tough going, and as more people enter the scheme we will see the problems grow,” says Mr Tanti.

“Some NDIS prices remain too low and unless changed we expect to see disability service providers exiting part of the market.

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“Market failure is not good for anyone, and it will ultimately hurt the people we are all here to serve,” he says.

The principal risk facing the NDIS is that the supply of services won’t keep up with the rapid growth in demand. While the number of registered NDIS providers is growing, half are inactive and 40 per cent are sole traders. The success of the NDIS depends heavily on existing not-for-profit providers, but they face barriers to growth: tight pricing, workforce shortages, uncertainty and insufficient information about demand.

“The NDIS is a once in a life time transformation of the way disability supports are delivered in Australia. While it has overwhelming support, the confidence in the system continues to waiver for both service providers and its end users. Let’s get this right before more people come on board,” says Mr Tanti.

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