



Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children

Inquiry into the implementation, performance and
governance of the National Disability Insurance Scheme in
the ACT

Submission to

Standing Committee on Health, Ageing,
Community and Social Services



Prepared by

Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children

Private Bag 29,

Parramatta NSW 2124

Key contact:

Chris Rehn

RIDBC Chief Executive



Content

Submission summary.....	3
About Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children.....	4
Response to the Terms of Reference	5
1. Unique factors relating to the provision of disability services affected by the implementation of the NDIS in the ACT.....	5

Submission summary

Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIDBC) is pleased to make this submission to the Standing Committee on Health, Ageing, Community and Social Services on the implementation, performance and governance of the National Disability Insurance Scheme in the ACT. In this submission, RIDBC responds to the following:

1. Unique factors relating to the provision of disability services affected by the implementation of the NDIS in the ACT.

RIDBC has the capacity to provide further information on a wider range of issues and would welcome the opportunity to provide any further information that may assist the Inquiry.

In summary, RIDBC submits that the Inquiry should consider and/or make the following recommendations:

1. That the NDIA ensure that Planners have a general understanding about different types of disability and that specialist teams or expertise is utilised for types of disability that require specialist knowledge such as sensory disability.
2. That the NDIS interface with mainstream services is made clearer at an operational level and that this information is publically available.

About Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children

Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIDBC) is Australia's largest non-government provider of therapy, education and cochlear implant services for children and adults with vision or hearing loss, their families, and the professionals that support them.

Our Mission is to provide quality and innovative services to achieve the best outcomes for current and future generations of Australians with vision and/or hearing loss.

We pride ourselves on working in collaboration with families, children and adults to tailor services that support and fit individual needs and life goals.

Services for children, adults, families and professionals:

- Assessment and diagnostics
- Early intervention and early learning programs
- Specialist preschools, schools and school support
- Therapy and re/habilitation services
- Audiology and cochlear implant services
- Research, postgraduate and professional education.

SCIC Cochlear Implant Program, an RIDBC service, is Australia's largest and most comprehensive cochlear implant program, setting new benchmarks and delivering the highest level of care and support at every stage of the cochlear implant journey.

RIDBC Renwick Centre conducts world-leading research and provides continuing professional education and postgraduate courses in a range of fields relating to the development and education of children with hearing or vision loss.

RIDBC services are provided to over 8,000 people from eighteen permanent sites across Australia, and by working remotely in rural and regional areas.

As a charity, RIDBC relies heavily on fundraising and community support to continue to make a difference in the lives of people with vision or hearing loss.

For more information about RIDBC, visit www.ridbc.org.au.

Response to the Terms of Reference

1. Unique factors relating to the provision of disability services affected by the implementation of the NDIS in the ACT.

The Royal Institute of Deaf and Blind Children has been providing NDIS supports to clients in the ACT since the NDIS trial and early transition in 2014 through to full Scheme rollout in 2017. It is acknowledged that access to the Scheme is delayed in some jurisdictions and many of the children who access our ACT services reside in NSW and are therefore needing to meet access through the NSW Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) Transition Provider. Children who are yet to enter the Scheme continue to be supported by the provision of quality evidence based early intervention. As children transition to the NDIS and receive funding for a lower level of support Providers are having to fund the shortfall through charitable contributions or children are receiving less intervention. For the purposes of ensuring the ongoing viability of high quality programs, decisions regarding service provision and funding should require that funded supports are consistent with international best practice and are demonstrably able to meet the needs of children with a hearing impairment.

Issues with the implementation of the NDIS within the ACT are not dissimilar to issues experienced in other jurisdictions as the NDIS is progressively rolled out. The scope of supports provided to participants in their Plans is highly variable despite similarities in needs and the substantial evidence available regarding the inputs required to achieve speech and language goals for hearing impaired participants. Plans being developed by planners with little or no experience in disability have resulted in a lack of support to participants. Planner knowledge is highly varied, as is their understanding of the interface arrangements with mainstream services, and the interpretation of reasonable and necessary supports.

Our clients experience with the process for approval of their Assistive Technology is variable with some clients having everything they request included in the Plan; and others having to provide assessments and quotes for a reasonable and necessary determination. These reasonable and necessary decisions are inconsistent despite participants with similar hearing impairment and functional capacity. Similarly the lack of understanding by planners around the interface of the Scheme with mainstream services, such as Australian Hearing, has caused confusion with participants, who are unclear about the types of services that are provided and funded through NDIS funding.

Currently we are managing a number of recent cases whereby some of our young clients have received funding for cochlear implant upgrades within their NDIS Plan. However, as Australian Hearing is the Government's sole provider of hearing services to children and young adults under the age of 26 years, these clients must meet upgrade criteria to

receive and upgrade irrespective of whether they have NDIS funding or not. The NDIA do not fund cochlear implant upgrades for anyone under the age of 26.

RIDBC is unable to provide upgrades consistent with our status as a registered NDIS Provider. We have been successful in escalating this issue to the NDIA and understand that further work is being progressed to develop advice for NDIA delegates around this process for NDIS participants under 26 years. However, the clients do not understand these interface boundaries and why they cannot have something that has been funded in their Plans. There is limited information publically available to participants on the interface of NDIS and mainstream supports and lack of clarity on decisions made by planners around funding of supports.

Recommendation:

1. That the NDIA ensure that Planners have a general understanding about different types of disability and that specialist teams or expertise is utilised for types of disability that require specialist knowledge such as sensory disability.
2. That the NDIS interface with mainstream services is made clearer at an operational level and that this information is publically available.