

Report finds targeted reforms are needed for the NDIS to reach its full potential

A new report into the NDIS market in Queensland has identified opportunities to reform the scheme's complex policy and regulatory framework to help the scheme reach its full potential.

The Queensland Productivity Commission (QPC) has today released its draft report for the inquiry into the NDIS market in Queensland.

The NDIS was introduced into Queensland in 2016 and now has nearly 79,000 Queensland participants and over 5,000 active registered providers in the state. It has transformed the delivery of disability services by increasing funding in Queensland by around 150 per cent, affording access to support for the first time for half of its Queensland participants, and providing greater choice and control for around three-quarters of Queensland participants.

The QPC found that despite these positive outcomes, progress in some areas is slow, and there are opportunities to improve the performance of the market to deliver better outcomes for Queenslanders with a disability.

"The NDIS represents a large investment by the Australian community to support some of the most vulnerable members of our community, so it is all the more important that it is working well," QPC Principal Commissioner Dr Karen Hooper said.

"To date the focus has largely been on transitioning people with a disability into the scheme. The Commission's draft report contends that the scheme now needs to shift its focus to making the NDIS market work more effectively and efficiently as a way of securing the overall objectives of the scheme and improved outcomes for people with a disability."

The QPC's report includes 39 draft recommendations across five key areas designed to:

- Realign participant, provider and agency incentives to deliver market outcomes consistent with the NDIS objectives
- Increase the availability of information and, if necessary, supports to allow better decision-making

- Simplify processes and reduce compliance burden to decrease costs and inefficiencies
- Provide greater flexibility and remove restrictions to allow participants, providers and agencies to operate more effectively and efficiently
- Improve the governance of the scheme to support oversight of performance monitoring and the focus on scheme objectives.

“The NDIS has multiple, sometimes conflicting, objectives—on the one hand, to provide choice and control and build capacity while, on the other, to provide consumer protections, limit supports to those that are reasonable and necessary and maintain the financial sustainability of the scheme. Balancing these objectives has given rise to an extensive regulatory and policy framework,” Dr Hooper said.

“In Queensland, while 90 per cent of projected participants have transitioned to the scheme, certain groups remain underrepresented. Challenges remain with scheme access, the planning and goal-setting process and procuring supports, with over 40 per cent of Queensland participants using less than half of their plan budgets.”

Dr Hooper thanked the many Queenslanders who have participated in the inquiry, which included consultation with more than 300 stakeholders, nine virtual roundtable sessions, two focus group sessions with participants and carers, regional consultations and site visits in Cairns, Townsville and Rockhampton. The inquiry also received 42 written submissions.

The QPC’s draft report is now open for feedback, with submissions closing on 4 February 2021. Public hearings will be held on February 5 and 8, with the final report to be submitted to the Queensland Government on 30 April 2021.

About the Queensland Productivity Commission

The QPC is a statutory body that provides advice on complex policy issues with the objective of improving living standards across Queensland by lifting productivity and driving economic growth. The QPC operates independently from the Queensland Government, providing advice and recommendations based on extensive consultation, investigation and analysis.

The QPC’s work encompasses four key streams:

- public inquiries into productivity, economic development and industry matters
- research on policy and regulatory matters beyond the QPC’s formal inquiry function

- advice to government agencies to develop quality assessments of regulatory proposals to support good policy development, consistent with best practice principles
- investigations on competitive neutrality complaints regarding state and local government business activities.

The Principal Commissioner is Dr Karen Hooper.

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