

Disability



Introduction

After years of campaigning, people with disabilities will now receive adequate support and resources through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Act of 2013. This scheme is administered by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) and is about delivering a national insurance approach to disability services in a financially sustainable way.

Under the NDIS, individualised funds are allocated to participants living with a permanent and significant disability on the basis of their assessed need and what is reasonable and necessary.

The NDIS has created a new era of person directed care, providing participants with greater purchasing power, choice and control over the support they receive and the agencies or individuals that they choose to provide those supports. The NDIS also brings a greater emphasis on harnessing the power of universal and community services and supports through the work of Information, Linkages and Capacity (ILC) building. ILC is aligned with the National Disability Strategy and aims to contribute to creating social inclusion for people with disabilities.

Baptcare advocated for and continues to strongly support the rollout of the NDIS, both in terms of the opportunity to support participants but also the wider contribution towards social inclusion. As a provider of aged care and family and community services across Victoria and Tasmania, Baptcare works with people with disabilities, their families and carers to build their capacity to enable and empower them to live a 'good and satisfying life', an ordinary life and one that is integrated and into the communities within which they live.

History and background

In light of the needs identified within the community, the Council of Australian Governments [COAG] endorsed a National Disability Strategy 2010–2020. This was followed by a Productivity Commission inquiry into disability care and support, leading to a COAG agreement on the need for reform through an insurance-based scheme. As a result, the new Commonwealth National Disability Insurance Scheme Act of 2013 was passed by federal parliament with support from all parties in the political process and with widespread support from the broader Australian community.

The NDIS represents a unique and exciting time in Australia's history. People with disabilities have advocated for many years for control over their lives, to be heard ('Nothing about me without me') and to have equality, fair treatment, independence, choice, control, and access to justice, transport, education, housing and health. These represent the basic human rights that many of us take for granted.

Many people with disabilities are living independently without assistance or with minimal help provided by family and informal carers.

However, others need substantial assistance in daily life and support to access study and employment, and participate in the life of the wider community.

The NDIS is seen as a chance to bring about major change and a chance to swing the pendulum back in the direction of self-determination, freedom and choice.

Current context and situation

At a policy and reform level Baptcare sees an alignment between the implementation of the NDIS; the intent of the National Disability Strategy 2010-2020; the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and the core philosophies of personalisation and citizenship.

Baptcare embraces this unique time in Australia and sees the opportunity and part that can be played to contribute to the creation of an inclusive Australian society. Baptcare sees its role in supporting people with disabilities by:

- Walking alongside, enabling and empowering participants to navigate the community, mainstream and funded supports that they need; and
- Working at a grassroots level, collaboratively with people with disability, communities, with disability service providers, community and mainstream providers and all levels of government to facilitate social inclusion.



Baptcare's Mission & Christian Witness

Baptcare's Vision is "Communities where every person is cherished" which articulates an aspiration for Baptcare to nurture communities in their entirety, developing and delivering services inclusively to all members. Baptcare's Christian heritage deeply informs our current practice and attitudes. In the time of Jesus, social exclusion stemming from deep and persistent disadvantage was a part of everyday life. Jesus acted decisively, repeatedly and radically to restore the dignity of disadvantaged individuals and to enable their full participation in society. Jesus called for this kind of behaviour to be a benchmark of true leadership.

Baptcare, inspired by Jesus, seeks to include and normalise the lives of those pushed to the margins by everyday society and to see the hidden peoples. Our Mission is "Partnering for fullness of life with people of all ages, cultures, beliefs and circumstances". Baptcare is committed to working with people with disabilities, providing them choice and control, to enable them to enter places of life as respected social participants. Baptcare believes true ethical leadership is demonstrated by a commitment to social inclusion. To this end we collaborate with both individuals and their community to facilitate the best outcomes for people who encounter our services.

A better future / what needs to change

Baptcare has worked closely with people with disabilities for many years in Victoria and Tasmania and this work has enabled us to gain an understanding of the barriers in place. In particular, people with disabilities tell us that they still experience difficulties due to:

- Unequal and disrespectful access to everyday services, including education and health services. These services are fundamental to all, and are more important to people with disabilities who often have higher health needs and require extra supports in education.
- Lack of suitable employment - Australia's international ranking of 21st out of 29 OECD countries for employment of people with disabilities is disappointing.

- As a nation we still have more to learn to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Barriers often present due to lack of understanding, fear of unfounded risks and lack of funds to make the reasonable adjustments necessary in the workplace.
- Practical and cultural barriers such as accessibility to venues, access to suitable transport, lack of access to communication mechanisms and social attitude towards people with disabilities.
- A general lack of awareness, education and training on the needs of people with disabilities in governments, mainstream services, employers and community or social clubs.
- Continued view of disability as a problem to be fixed rather than understanding the need for society to see the individual first and the disability second, and focusing on the strengths of individuals and changing societal responses.
- Funding often becomes a barrier for improved social inclusion of people with disabilities - for example the funding needed to adapt buildings for accessibility or funding needed to support different forms of communication.

These barriers in social, economic and civic life need to be removed to enable social inclusion to occur. It is then, that people with disabilities will be fully enabled to reach their full potential. However, social inclusion cannot be achieved without collaboration between people with disabilities, families, carers, Governments (Commonwealth, State and Territory and Local Government), mainstream services, employers, Not for Profits, communities, disability service providers and the NDIS.

Now is the time for us to seize this opportunity and the momentum to create the future we wish to see for all. Change needs to be driven through a combined approach of strategic direction and action from the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments and Local Governments who can work with and influence mainstream providers (such as Health, Education, Employers, Housing and the criminal justice system). This also needs to be combined with grassroots community based activities that seek to educate, and create inclusion and connections within local communities.



Policy position

- 1 Baptcare:** recognises and affirms strong support for the NDIS as an important disability policy and is committed to taking up opportunities to participate as roll-out continues.
- 2 Baptcare:** is committed to service delivery to people with disabilities which works towards equality of outcomes in the areas of choice and control whilst deepening our capacity to effectively respond in a consumer-driven sector through working with advocacy organisations, supporting the rights and promoting opportunities for greater social inclusion and community engagement for people with disabilities.
- 3 Baptcare:** is committed to actively recruiting people with disabilities into the workforce and to create a physical environment that enables inclusion, safety, wellbeing and participation.
- 4 Commonwealth Government:** Baptcare welcomes the implementation of the NDIS and urges the Commonwealth Government to ensure adequate financial support for effective rollout without inhibiting participants from receiving reasonable and necessary supports.
- 5 The community:** Baptcare urges mainstream providers, state and local government, churches and community groups to actively engage with and ensure their property and programs provide equality of access, social inclusion and participation to people with disabilities and their carers.

References

Commonwealth of Australia (2013). National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013. Australian Government, Canberra.

Commonwealth of Australia (2011). Commonwealth of Australia: National Disability Strategy 2010–2020. Australian Government, Canberra:

Baptcare is a customer focused, faith centred and purpose driven organisation working across Victoria and Tasmania, providing residential and community care for older people and support to children, families, and people with disability, financially disadvantaged people and people seeking asylum.