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Preparing for the NDIS - what you need to know

PREPARATIONS FOR the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) are taking place across the Tweed and Northern Rivers as the July 1 start date approaches with up to 1,200 new jobs likely to be created across the Northern Rivers during the rollout.

The Weekly recently spoke with the NDIS media team at the Governance & Strategic Communications Division of the National Disability Insurance Agency, to ask them several questions about the NDIS including service distribution, employment and rollout schedule.

How many services have signed up in the Tweed specifically so far? Further to this, how many do you anticipate?

We can't provide specific figures for this question because the Scheme has not yet rolled out in the Tweed region. We will be able to provide more local data following the 1 July rollout.

According to the National Disability Insurance Agency's Market Position Statement for NSW, the level of annual expenditure on disability supports and services across the state is estimated to grow from \$3.4 billion to \$6.8 billion in 2019. The workforce required to service this demand in NSW is estimated to grow by around 23,000 to 28,000 new jobs by 2019. In northern NSW, it is expected that more than 1,200 new jobs could be created.

Once fully implemented in 2019, the NDIS is expected to support about 142,000 people in New South Wales and 460,000 people nation-wide. In northern NSW, which encompasses Tweed, Ballina, Byron, Clarence Valley, Kyogle, Lismore and Richmond Valley, it is expected up to about 7,300 people will be eligible to join the NDIS - an increase of more than 78 per cent from those currently receiving support from the region.

At 31 December 2016, there were 2365 service providers registered in NSW, and 5110 providers registered nationwide.

Sole traders and individuals made up 37 per cent of all NDIS registered providers at 31 December 2016.

What are some of the services that will be available?

The NDIS will help people with disability achieve their goals; this may include greater independence, community involvement, employment and improved wellbeing.

Some examples of services funded by the NDIS include personal care and support through personal support workers, access to the community through day programs, therapy services and essential equipment like wheelchairs

and hoists. Many people in the Scheme will receive disability support for the first time in their lives.

The NDIS also provides people with disability, their families and carers with information and referrals to support services in the community, even if they are not an NDIS participant.

What should carers and families be doing to ensure they have access from July 1?

In NSW, the NDIS will be rolled out by district. When the

NDIS commences in a district, people currently receiving supports through New South Wales Government specialist disability services will be move to the NDIS first. If someone is not currently receiving disability supports and think they may be eligible, they can apply to access the NDIS from 1 July 2018.

The Northern Rivers area of NSW will start transitioning to the NDIS from July 2017. Social Futures has been selected as the NDIS Partner in the Community to deliver Local Area Coordination in the Northern Rivers region of NSW, and will be conducting a range of NDIS community events and workshops from March to inform people about the NDIS.

To become an NDIS participant a person must have a permanent disability that significantly affects their ability to take part in everyday activities and be aged less than 65 when they first enter the Scheme. Participants must also be an Australian citizen or hold a permanent visa or a Protected Special Category visa and they must live in Australia.

If you already receive supports from New South Wales Government specialist disability services, you will be contacted by an NDIS representative when it is time to transition to the NDIS.

If you are not currently receiving supports, visit www.ndis.gov.au to check your eligibility or contact the National Disability Insurance Agency on 1800 800 110.

What do the changes mean to health providers? Further, how are health providers being encouraged to sign up?

The NDIS market will expand dramatically in coming years, creating significant opportunities across the Tweed for the existing disability service sector and for new providers.

However, the NDIS will also benefit other mainstream businesses that make their services accessible and inclusive to people with a disability. Providers can be large companies, small businesses or sole traders and individuals.

The process for becoming an NDIS registered provider is outlined in the Provider Registration Kit available at www.ndis.gov.au

All businesses in the Tweed Valley are encouraged to look at this and consider their suitability to provide supports to people with disability.

General Practitioners and other health professionals may be asked to provide evidence to support a request to access the NDIS.

Like all Australians, NDIS participants are likely to need healthcare services throughout their lives. Participants may also have more complex healthcare needs associated with their disability.

The NDIS is not intended to replace the supports or services provided by other mainstream systems, including Medicare and the healthcare system.

NDIS will fund supports which help the participant manage ongoing functional impairment that results from their disability such as:



Tweed Valley Weekly

Thursday 2/03/2017

Page: 8
Section: General News
Region: Murwillumbah NSW, AU
Circulation: 24000
Type: Regional
Size: 483.00 sq.cms.



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- Supports that enable participants to undertake activities of daily living;

- Aids and equipment. The health system is responsible for assisting participants with the treatment of health conditions, such as: diagnosis and treatment of health conditions (including ongoing or chronic);

- Medications and pharmaceuticals;

- Time limited, recovery-oriented (rehabilitation) aimed at restoring their health.

Finally, what are some of the biggest hurdles between now and July 1?

The transition phase is a unique period for the NDIS. We have a large number of people joining the Scheme during a short period of time. Things won't be perfect immediately, but we will continue to listen, learn and improve as the Scheme grows.

As the NDIS is changing the way we support people with disability in Australia, it will take time for the marketplace to develop, which will allow people with disability to have choice and control.

Our focus is on as smooth as possible transition, where we move from old systems to new, and avoid disruption to services. In some areas of Australia, the market will not be fully developed during the early stages of the scheme's roll out.

The Agency will be working in these areas to support market development as quickly as possible, but this will take time.