



Delivered by the  
National Disability  
Insurance Agency

Q1  
2023-24



# NDIS Quarterly report to disability ministers

30 September 2023

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## Acknowledgement of Country

The NDIA acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation and the Traditional Custodians of the lands across which our Agency conducts our business. We pay our respects to the custodians of the land on which we work as well as their ancestors and Elders, past, present and emerging.

The NDIA is committed to honouring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters, seas and their rich contribution to society.

Artwork 'Belonging' by Charmaine Mumbulla.

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# This report

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This report is an overview of the performance and operations of the NDIA for the three months from 1 July 2023 to 30 September 2023.

The NDIA is committed to ensuring all data around NDIA performance and participant outcomes remains accessible and easy to understand by different audiences.

Analysis and key insights are presented in this report, including key figures and cross jurisdictional comparisons in the appendices.

As part of streamlining the report, some of the Appendices in earlier reports are now available as Supplements on the [NDIS website](#)<sup>1</sup>.

Supplementary list:

- National, State and Territory statistics including:
  - National
  - New South Wales
  - Victoria
  - Queensland
  - Western Australia
  - South Australia
  - Tasmania
  - Australian Capital Territory
  - Northern Territory
- Participants by service district and support type, and committed supports and payments by service district
- Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA)

Other changes to the Appendices are:

- Appendix B (Scheme roll-out: Timing and locations) is available in previous quarterly reports.
- Appendix D (Outcomes Framework Questionnaires) is now as renamed as Appendix B.
- Appendix N (State/Territory – comparison of key metrics) is now renamed as Appendix D.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://data.ndis.gov.au/reports-and-analyses/quarterly-report-supplement>

# Introduction

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## Key highlights for Quarter 1 2023–24

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) continued to make a positive difference to participants, their families and carers in the quarter ending 30 September 2023.

The most recent participant outcome data relating to participants who have been in the Scheme for at least 2 years<sup>2</sup> clearly demonstrates the positive impacts being delivered by the Scheme<sup>3</sup>:

- **Participation in community and social activities** has **increased by 7 percentage points** from **35%** to **42%** for all Scheme participants aged 15 years and older.
- **Participation in work (percentage in a paid job)** has **increased by 11 percentage points** from **10%** to **22%** for participants aged 15 to 24.
- **The percentage of parents and carers in a paid job** has **increased by 6 percentage points** from **46%** to **51%** for parents/carers of participants aged 0 to 14 years.
- **Positive perceptions of whether the NDIS has helped with choice and control** has **increased 10 percentage points** from **67%** to **77%** for participants aged 15 years and older.<sup>4</sup>

Other key highlights for the quarter include:

- The National Contact Centre (NCC) continued with the ongoing recruitment of staff for the insourced contact centre with a focus on disability employment. As of 30 September 2023, **39%** of the insourced NCC operations team identify as having a disability.
- As a result of the efforts of Remote Community Connectors (RCCs), the proportion of participants entering the Scheme this quarter who identify as First Nations people has increased to **10.0%**, bringing the total proportion of First Nations participants in the Scheme to **7.8%**.

## Quarter 1 updates

This quarter, the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) has been focused on:

1. Scheme financial experience
2. Reform for outcomes
3. National expansion of the NDIA's new computer system
4. Improving the participant experience

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<sup>2</sup> <https://data.ndis.gov.au/reports-and-analyses/participant-dashboards>

<sup>3</sup> Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole percentage; differences are calculated from unrounded metrics.

<sup>4</sup> These results compare indicator results at first reassessment (noting that the Scheme has not an opportunity to help at baseline), with results measured at the most recent participant plan reassessment for each respondent. Trial participants are excluded.

## Scheme financial experience

Since 30 June 2023, payments for participant supports and the number of participants entering the Scheme are similar to expectations in the June 2023 projections.

Total Scheme expenses for the 3 months to 30 September 2023 were \$10.1 billion (on an accrual basis) or 0.9 per cent higher than the estimate from the June 2023 projections. The main drivers of this difference are:

- **Number of participants** – the total number of Scheme participants at 30 September 2023 was **631,529**, which is approximately 4,350 (0.7%) higher than the June 2023 projections. This is primarily driven by the total number of participants with developmental delay at 30 September 2023 which was 90,320 or approximately 5,800 (6.9%) higher than the June 2023 projections.
- **Average payment per participant** – the average payment per participant during the September 2023 quarter was \$63,600 (on a cash basis) or 1.3% higher than expectations after taking into account the actual mix of participants who have entered the Scheme since 30 June 2023. However, the average payment experience varies by disability type and other participant characteristics. The average payment per participant with developmental delay for the September 2023 quarter was \$14,300, which was \$2,300 (19%) higher than expectations based on the June 2023 projections.

The NDIA continues to examine available data to understand the key risks to financial sustainability of the Scheme. They include:

- High numbers of children with developmental delay entering the Scheme, as well as increasing numbers of adult new entrants with autism.
- Average plan budgets, which drive average payments per participant. Overall, plan budgets have increased by 15.1% (annualised) between June 2023 and September 2023 for participants already in the Scheme. Approximately 2.5% can be attributed to the combined effects of indexation, following the 2022–23 Annual Pricing Review (APR). The remaining 12.7% growth is over and above indexation and pricing impacts.

The measures announced in the 2023–24 Budget are aimed to support participant outcomes and the effective and sustainable operation of the Scheme. Through co-design, the NDIA is implementing a program of initiatives designed to improve early intervention outcomes for children in the Scheme, improve participant planning processes and consistency in Home and Living eligibility decisions for participants with complex and high support needs, which are expected to assist in addressing key risks to financial sustainability outlined above. Changes in settings arising from NDIS Review recommendations are also anticipated to lead to further moderation in Scheme growth, to achieve the target set by National Cabinet.



## Reform for outcomes

The Minister for the NDIS, the Hon. Bill Shorten, has outlined six reforms that will deliver better outcomes for people with disability and, in the process, help secure the ongoing sustainability of the Scheme.

This quarter, the NDIA continued the co-design work with participants and disability community representatives on the reform initiatives. Six co-design Working Groups and an Implementation Steering Committee have been established to deliver the reform for outcomes program of co-design work.

The priority co-design projects include:

1. Investing in the NDIA's workforce capability and systems, resulting in better consistency and equity in decision-making for access and planning decisions for NDIS participants.
2. Better supporting NDIS participants to manage their plan within budget, including assistance from the NDIA throughout the plan period and holding plan managers, support coordinators and providers to account.
3. Implementing a new lifetime planning approach, to ensure plans are more transparent and flexible for life events.
4. Improving the way the NDIA provides Supported Independent Living (SIL) and to ensure participants receive the right NDIS funding for home and living supports they need to live as independently as possible.
5. Supporting participants to make purchase decisions to buy the right products or services to meet their needs, including through preferred provider panels and the use of support coordinators.
6. Improving the way the NDIA monitors compliance and prevents fraud within the Scheme.

To support the delivery of these priorities, the Commonwealth Government announced an investment of more than \$720 million over four years from 2023–24 to lift the NDIA's capability, capacity and systems to better support participants.<sup>5</sup>

## National expansion of the NDIA's new computer system

The NDIA introduced its new computer system and processes across Australia from 30 October 2023.

The NDIA's new computer system and improved processes will support the Government to deliver on its commitments and provide the NDIS experience participants expect to see.

We know there is a direct link between making it easier for our staff and partners to do their job and a better NDIS experience for participants.

The NDIA is taking a staged approach to introducing the new system to help make the change as easy as possible for participants and providers.

The NDIA has been testing the new system in Tasmania from November 2022. The lessons learned has informed how the NDIA will expand the computer system nationally and make the change easier.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ndis.gov.au/news/9087-media-release-minister-national-cabinet-commits-sustainable-ndis>

In preparing for the national expansion, the NDIA spoke with participants, families and carers, disability advocates, community organisations and government services. Feedback received during engagement activities will inform how the NDIA supports participants and the disability community during the national expansion.

The new computer system will enable the NDIA to deliver a better participant experience, and to operationalise the outcomes from the Government's recent Budget investment, the Independent Review of the NDIS (NDIS Review), and the Disability Royal Commission (DRC) into Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.

Further information about the national expansion can be found in section 6 of the report.

## Improving the participant experience

**The NDIA continues to improve processes to empower participants and their experience.**

The NDIA has continued improving the experience of participants, focusing on the following areas:

- **Home and Living demonstration project grants** – The NDIA has announced the results of the *Empowering Participants: Information, Assistance and Connections* grant round. Four organisations have been awarded the grants for projects that will test different ways of delivering support to NDIS participants looking to explore their home and living options. An investment of \$1.018 million over two years will establish the second round of home and living demonstration projects. Further information can be found in section 4.8 of this report.
- **Independent Expert Review (IER)** – we have concluded the pilot program, which involved an independent disability expert reviewing a case and providing a recommendation to the NDIA. The evaluation report was published on the NDIS website in November 2023. The trial has informed improvements in our approach to dispute resolution and formal outcomes of the evaluation of the trial will continue to support ongoing improvements to our future Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) resolution processes.
- **Improved hospital discharge** – we are working with the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments on our continued commitment to improving the safe and timely discharge of NDIS participants from hospital. In the September 2023 quarter:
  - The NDIA target of contacting NDIS participants within 4 days of the NDIA being notified of a participant's admission remains high at **92%** for the September 2023 quarter, an increase from **89%** in the June 2023 quarter.
  - The average number of days between a NDIS participant being medically ready for discharge and discharged was **24 days** in the September 2023 quarter, reduced from **27 days** in June 2023 quarter and **30 days** in March 2023.

- **Younger People in Residential Aged Care (YPIRAC)** – The NDIA is committed to supporting the transition of young people living in Residential Aged Care (RAC) to appropriate accommodation, and stopping entries of young people into RAC, except in very limited exceptional circumstances. Significant effort across the NDIA, Department of Social Services (DSS), and Department of Health and Aged Care (DoHAC) continues to be undertaken to support younger people living in, or at risk of entering RAC. This includes the NDIA establishing a YPIRAC Accommodation Project Team. This team has been established to provide intensive, proactive, and individualised support to source age-appropriate accommodation for younger NDIS participants at risk of entry to aged care and support those already in RAC to exit.

## Disability Royal Commission

The DRC has tabled its [Final Report into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability](#). The report follows four years of hearings and submissions.

It is important to acknowledge the courage of those who shared their experiences of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation, while commending them for their dedicated and passionate work over the course of the inquiry.

The 12-volume report devotes a volume to the voices of people with disability. It sets out a total of 222 recommendations on how to improve laws, policies, structures, and practices to ensure a more inclusive and just society.

## NDIS review

The NDIA has actively engaged with the Independent Review into the NDIS (NDIS Review). The NDIA Chief Executive Officer and Board Chair regularly met with the NDIS Review Co-Chairs during the quarter, for strategic discussion on the NDIA's reform priorities and the NDIS Review's emerging recommendations. The NDIS Review will report to the Disability Reform Ministers Council in November 2023.

On 18 October 2022, the Minister for the NDIS announced the NDIS Review. An overarching goal of the NDIS Review is to put people with disability back at the centre of the NDIS. It aims to help restore trust, confidence and pride in the NDIS.

This Review is an opportunity for a strong focus on improving the operation of the Scheme and building a collective understanding of how to maximise its effectiveness for participants. As part of this process, people with disability have been involved in developing the scope and terms of reference for the review as well as contributing to it.

The NDIS Review involves two parts:

- **Part 1** examines the design, operations and sustainability of the NDIS.
- **Part 2** examines ways to build a more responsive, supportive and sustainable market and workforce.

The Review panel has been consulting widely and listening to the community, and the Agency has contributed extensively throughout the Review. A final report is expected to be provided by the Independent Review Panel to Disability Reform Ministers in November 2023, and more information can be found on the [NDIS Review website](#)<sup>6</sup>.

It is expected that the NDIS Review will lead to changes in the NDIA's work plan. Initiatives and activities described in this report, many of which commenced prior to the announcement of the NDIS Review, should be viewed in that context.

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6 <https://www.ndisreview.gov.au/>



## Jono combines his love of sport with his career ambition

When leaving school, Jonathan was unsure of which path to follow in life.

Jonathan, affectionately known as 'Jono', is a 20-year-old from Geelong, who lives with a chromosomal condition and intellectual disability. When leaving school, he was unsure of which path to follow in life and what may lay ahead.

But combining his love of sport with career ambition, Jono has become a swim instructor and is now leading an all-round fulfilling life.

'I always liked swimming and did it through school. I got a second place in regionals in a 4x50 freestyle relay team,' Jono said. 'I was working in hospitality and my dad said "let's look at teaching". I researched a course, and 2 days later, I started.'

While his sporting pursuits are supported by his close-knit family, Jono's success in navigating the workforce with confidence was built through NDIS Employment Assistance. He linked up with NDIS provider 4gr Employment Consulting Service, who worked with him to find employers that matched his likes and interests.

Jono undertook a swimming instructor course before engaging in interview preparation and planning with 4gr. He secured a casual role with Geelong Aquatic Centre and a second job with the Geelong City Council's Leisurelink.

'With Jono, we delivered a training model to build a foundation of job-ready skills through simulation sessions both face-to-face and online. Ahead of Jono's interview, we did some role playing and preparation, and helped him get ready,' said Jono's 4gr employment lead and mentor, Nina.

Performing a range of duties, Jono teaches children and primary school groups the critical skills of swimming. While supervising and instructing a range of school children in the water can be overwhelming, Jono said building skills through his 4gr training and support had really benefited him.

Building on that confidence, Jono took the next step in securing his long-term employment goals by deciding to study towards the end of last year, enrolling in a Certificate III of Fitness, with a long-term goal of becoming a qualified personal trainer.

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**'I'm definitely proud of how far I've come,' Jono said. 'The NDIS has been really important for me.'**

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# Section 1: Participants and their plans

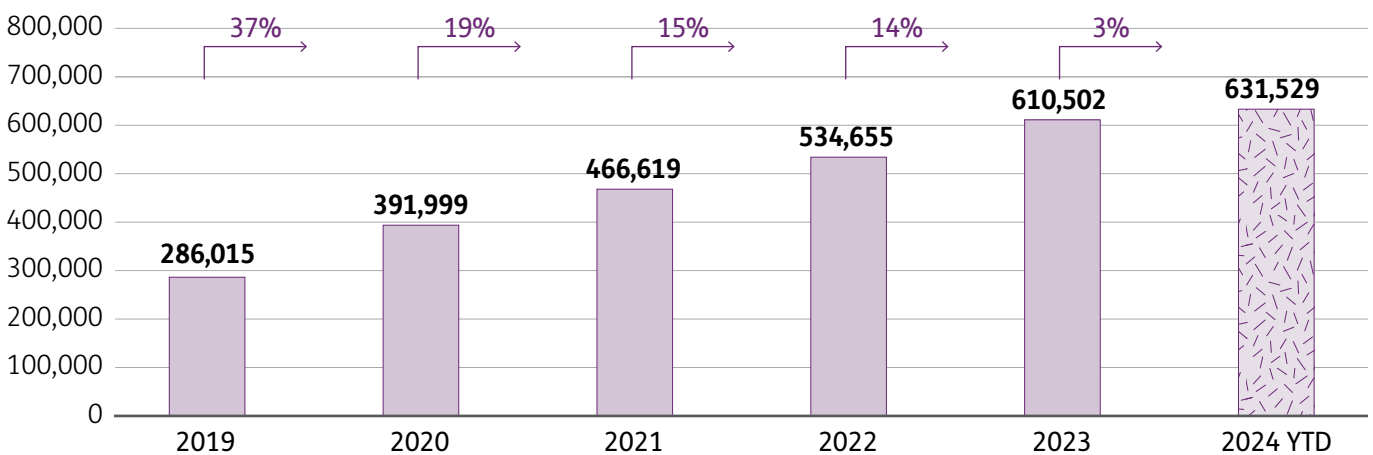


More than 630,000 participants are receiving support from the NDIS.

## 1.1 Number of participants in the Scheme

At September 2023, 631,529 participants had approved plans.<sup>7</sup> This represents a 3 per cent net increase from last quarter (a net increase of 21,027 participants since June). This quarterly increase is equivalent to an annual increase of 15%, similar to that observed over the past two years.

Figure 1: Active participants with approved plans and percentage increase over time for years ending 30 June<sup>8</sup>



<sup>7</sup> 44,243 participants with approved plans have left the NDIS in the period between 1 July 2013 and 30 September 2023.

<sup>8</sup> This is the net increase in the number of active participants in the NDIS each period noting some participants have left the NDIS.

## 1.2 Participation rates

The number of NDIS participants as a proportion of the Australian population peaks between the ages of 5 and 7, with approximately 12 per cent of 5 to 7 year-old males and 5 per cent of 5 to 7 year-old females being NDIS participants.

Participation rate refers to the proportion of the Australian population who are NDIS participants. The rate varies by age and gender, reflecting the prevalence of different disability types.

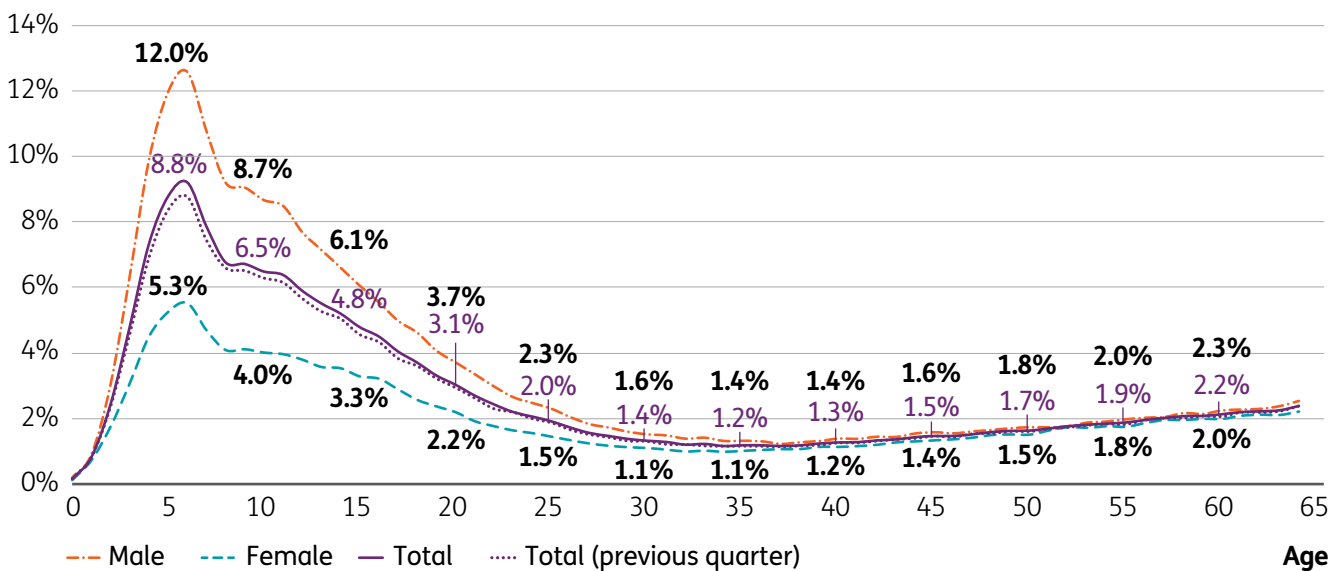
Overall, the rate of participation in the NDIS rises steeply from birth, peaking at roughly 9 per cent between the ages of 5 and 7. The rate then declines steadily to around one per cent at age 35, before rising gradually to two per cent by age 64. The shape of these participation rates reflects the age and disability profile of participants in the Scheme, with over half of all NDIS participants aged 18 or under.

Participation rates for males and females differ considerably at younger ages. At the peak, between the ages of 5 and 7, the participation rate for males (12 per cent) is more than double that of females (5 per cent).

Much of the difference in participation rates by gender can be explained by disability type. For NDIS participants aged 18 or under, the most prevalent disability types are autism and developmental delay. Both disability types have higher prevalence in males than females. Psychosocial disability and Intellectual disability are a high proportion of the remaining disability types.

Participation rates at ages up to 25 are slightly higher than last quarter's results, increasing by between 0.1 to 0.4 percentage points in the younger age bands.

Figure 2: Participation rates<sup>9,10</sup>



The participation rates by age and gender in each service district are shown in the Supplements.

9 There were 8,226 participants aged 0 to 64 years with a gender of "Other" at 30 September 2023. The participation rates for this group are included within the total rates.  
 10 The 2021 Census population has been adopted since the March 2023 report, increasing the calculated participation rates, moreso between the ages of 0 and 6, where participation rates are higher by 0.3 percentage points.

### 1.3 Participant characteristics

The NDIA continues to monitor the number of participants entering the NDIS who identify as First Nations Australians, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD), and participants who are from remote and very remote areas.

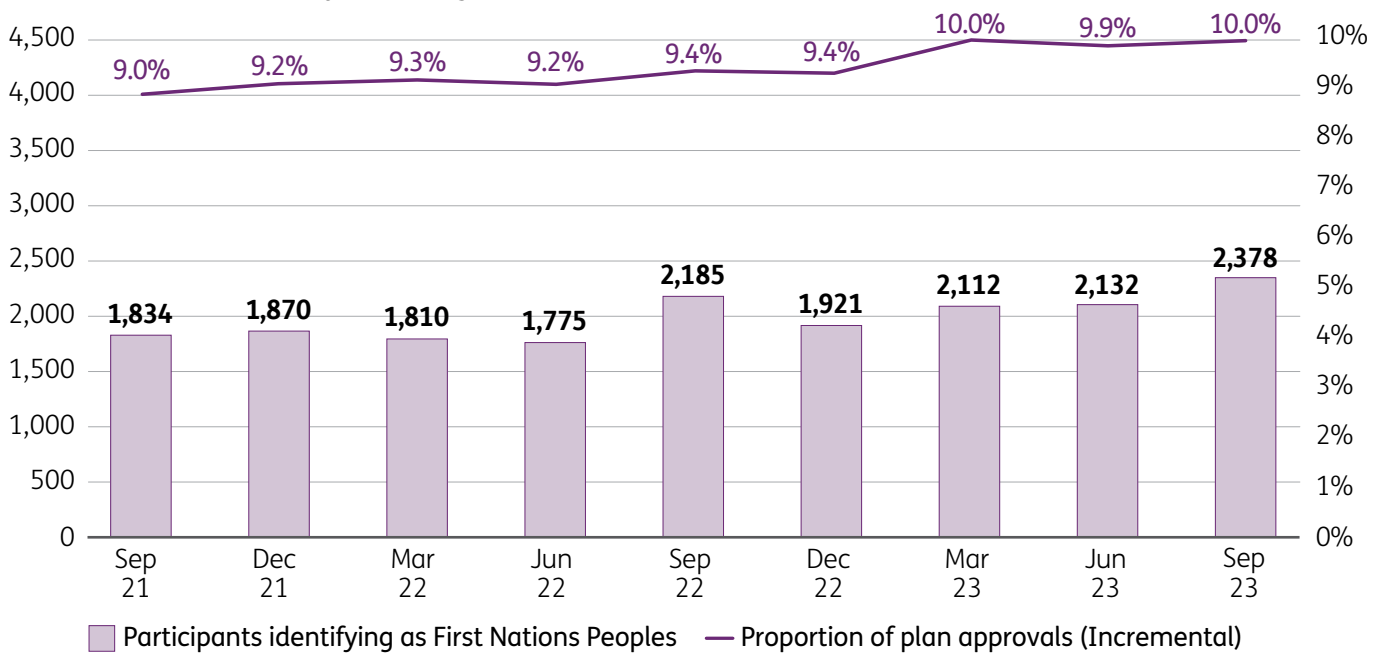
Of the 23,803 participants entering and receiving a plan in the quarter:

- **10.0%** were **First Nations peoples**<sup>11</sup>
- **8.5%** were **CALD**<sup>12</sup>
- **1.3%** were from **remote and very remote areas**<sup>13</sup>

The NDIA is continuing to co-design and develop the CALD Strategy refresh and a new First Nations Strategy.<sup>14</sup>

Trends in First Nations participants are shown in the following figures. The proportion of participants entering the Scheme this quarter who identify as First Nations people has increased to 10.0%, and the total proportion of First Nations participants in the Scheme has increased to 7.8%. This is due to the efforts of RCCs to support remote communities to understand, navigate and participate in the Scheme. CALD and Remote participation is similar to that observed in previous reports, and is not repeated in this report.

Figure 3: Number and proportion of First Nations participants entering quarterly over time incrementally (below) and cumulatively (over page)<sup>15,16</sup>



11 This compares to 8 per cent of the Australian population identifying as First Nations Peoples who have a need for assistance. Source: Census of Population and Housing 2021 (“Need for Assistance” variable), Persons Place of Usual Residence, by Indigenous Status.

12 The percentage of CALD participants excludes participants who identify as First Nations Peoples. Further, the NDIA published extra analysis on CALD participants in the September 2021 quarterly report (<https://www.ndis.gov.au/about-us/publications/quarterly-reports>). The analysis indicated that it is likely that CALD participants are joining the NDIS but have not been identified as CALD in the data collected, rather than a large number of CALD people with a disability not currently being in the NDIS. With the introduction of the new ICT system, the opportunity to collect improved data on participants should allow better identification of CALD participants.

13 This compares to 2 per cent of the Australian population living in remote or very remote areas. Source: Census of Population and Housing 2021, Persons Place of Usual Residence, by Remoteness Area.

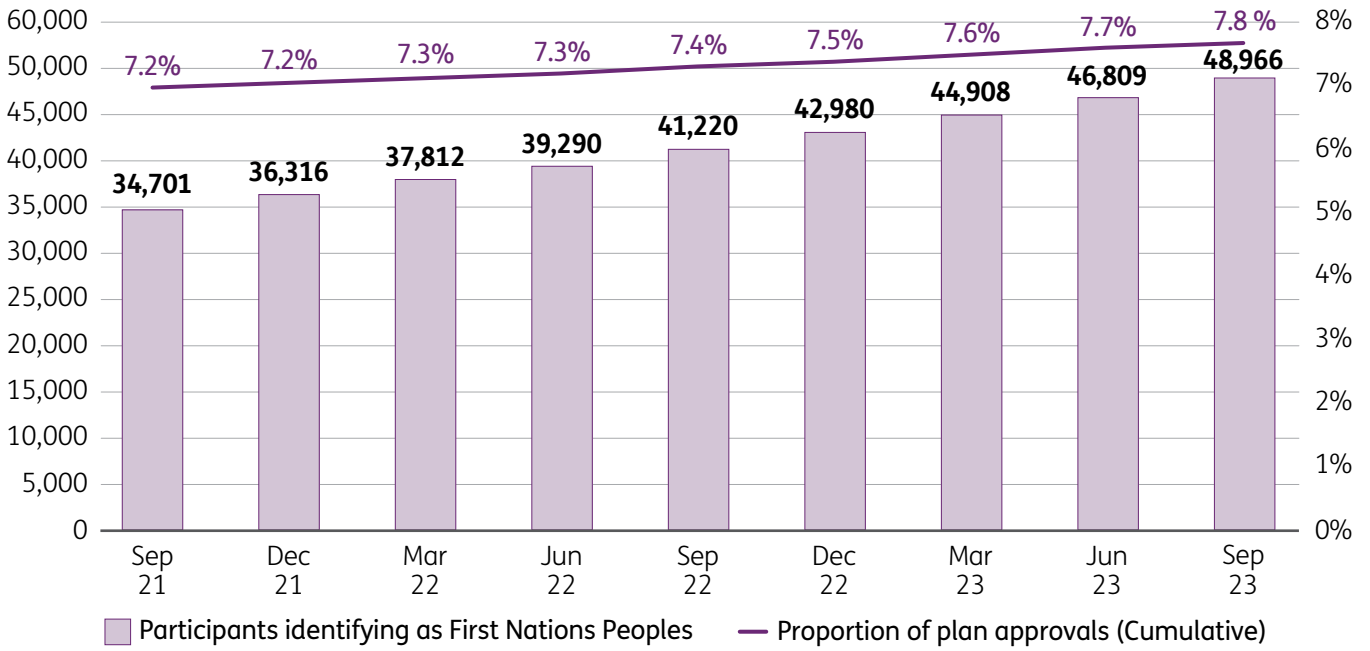
14 Further information on these strategies can be found here: <https://www.ndis.gov.au/about-us/strategies/first-nations-strategy> and <https://www.ndis.gov.au/about-us/strategies/cultural-and-linguistic-diversity-strategy>

15 The incremental chart shows the distribution of new participants that have entered in each quarter. The cumulative chart shows the distribution of active participants as at each quarter over time.

16 <https://data.ndis.gov.au/explore-data> has detail on numbers of CALD participants and remote and very remote participants



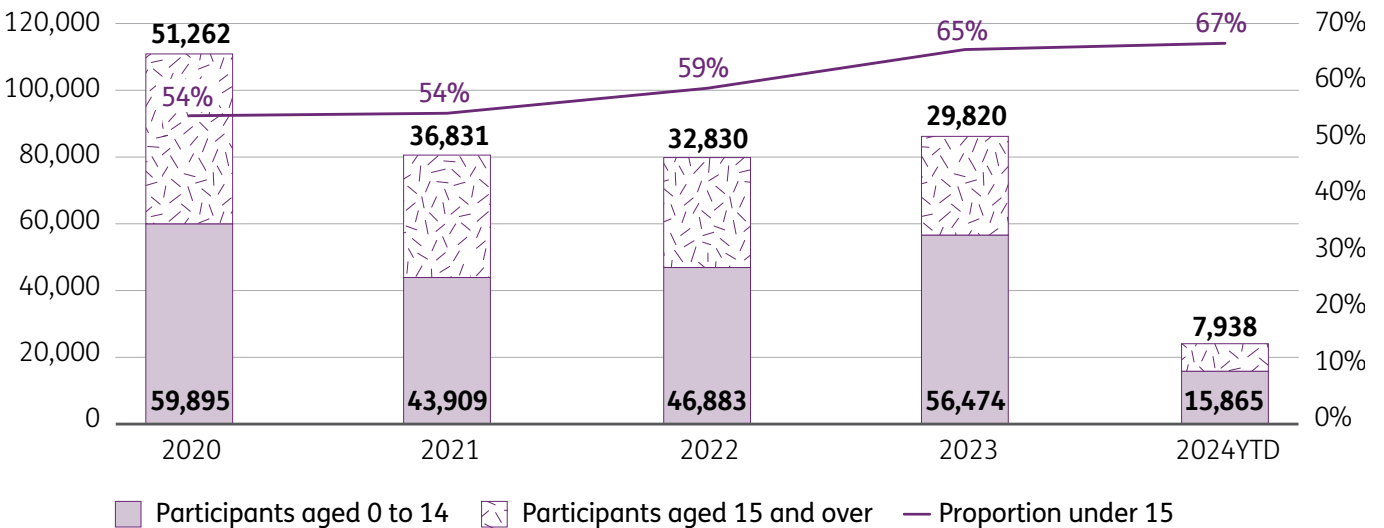
Section one: Participants and their plans



**Children in the NDIS (younger than 15)**

The number of children entering the Scheme continues to grow at a faster rate than older participants. Of the 23,803 participants entering and receiving a plan in the quarter, **67%** were children younger than 15. This is a continuation of the increasing proportions of younger participants joining the Scheme.

Figure 4: Number and proportion of participants by age band entering by financial year ending 30 June



## Younger People in Residential Aged Care (YPIRAC)

### The YPIRAC Targets

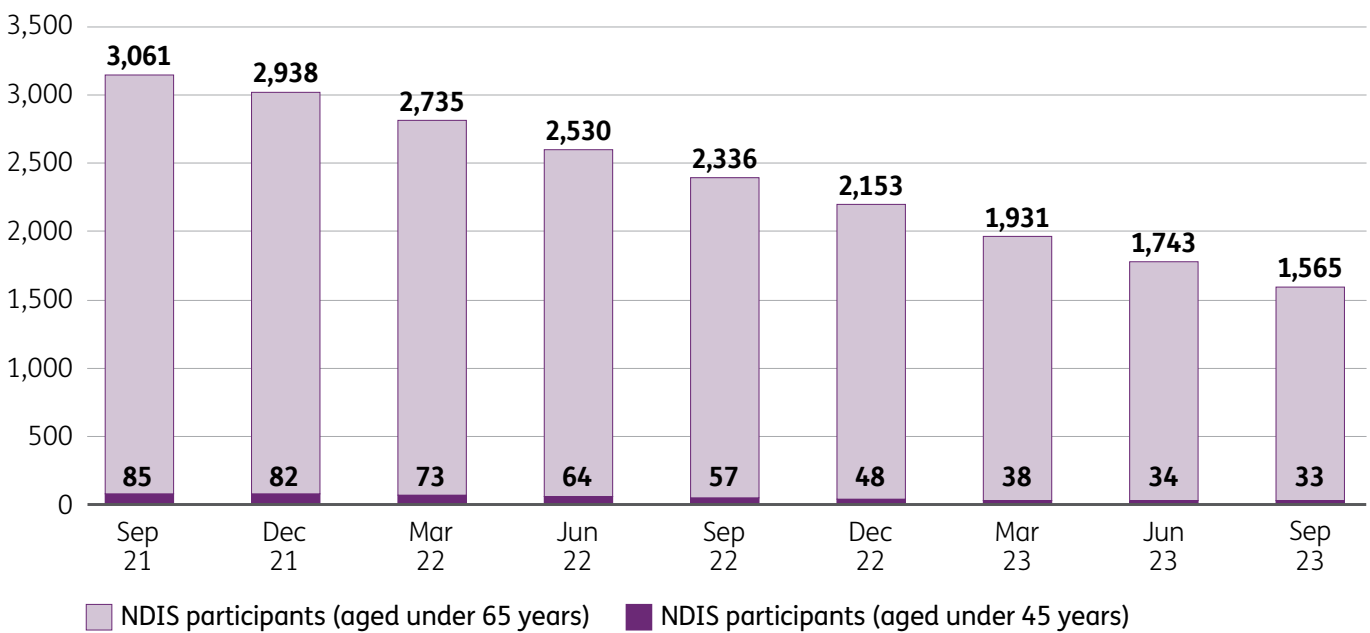
The Australian Government is committed to achieving the YPIRAC targets which seek to ensure that, apart from where there are exceptional circumstances, there are no people under the age of 65 living in aged care by 2025. The NDIA is supporting this achievement with a team of dedicated YPIRAC Planners and Accommodation Officers.

### The Agency's focus on YPIRAC

At 30 September 2023, there were 1,565 participants aged under 65 years in residential aged care with an NDIS approved plan, including 33 who were aged under 45 years (two per cent).

From 1 October 2022 to 30 September 2023, 207 participants have transitioned from residential aged care into age-appropriate settings. This includes 17 who have left to their own home (rented or owned), 64 who have exited to SDA, three who have left to medium term accommodation and 123 who have left to other shared living arrangements using SIL funding or to other group residential settings. Since 1 July 2016, 1,062 participants have left residential aged care and are now in a more appropriate accommodation setting.

Figure 5: Number of NDIS participants in residential aged care (under 65 and under 45)<sup>17</sup>



As at 30 September 2023, 508 younger people in residential aged care have a goal to leave residential aged care, including 16 under the age of 45. The NDIA is committed to supporting the transition of young people living in Residential Aged Care (RAC) to appropriate accommodation, and stopping entries of young people into RAC, except in very limited exceptional circumstances.

<sup>17</sup> Represents the number of NDIS participants in residential aged care as per data available on respective quarter-ends.

## 1.4 Children in the NDIS (younger than 9)

At 30 September 2023, there were 151,757 children younger than 9 with an NDIS plan, and a further 16,555 accessing early connections.

From 1 July 2023 the NDIA extended access to Early Childhood arrangements through its Early Childhood Partners in the Community to children under the age of 9. These arrangements had previously been available to children under the age of 7. This change had been recommended through the Early Childhood Early Intervention Reset initiative commenced in 2021. This change ensures children, and their families are supported by an early childhood partner during and after their transition to primary school.

In addition to the 151,757 children younger than 9 with an approved plan:

- **5,571** children had met the access criteria under Section 24 of the NDIS Act (Disability) or Section 25 of the NDIS Act (Early Intervention) and were waiting for an approved plan.
- **4,577** were awaiting an access decision from the NDIA (of which 2,899 (63%) were accessing early connections from the early childhood approach).
- **17,200** children were supported by the early childhood approach (of which **16,555 (96%)** were accessing early connections). Not all children need to apply for the NDIS because some will receive early connections, along with support from mainstream and community services.

Throughout the quarter, the Agency continued to focus on improving access to supports for children and families in remote and very remote areas. This effort contributed to 178 children meeting access criteria to participate in the NDIS, of which 87 identified as First Nations families. Of the 151,757 children aged younger than 9 with an approved plan as at 30 September 2023, 2,155 were children in remote and very remote areas.



## The NDIS gives Tanesha a new perspective on life

At the age of 14, Tanesha, was diagnosed with Friedreich's ataxia (FA), a rare incurable genetic disorder.

The proud 23-year-old Biripi woman from Warners Bay said when she first heard her diagnosis she didn't understand what it was or what was going to happen.

'I was told there was no cure. I didn't understand, but now in 2023 I wouldn't wish it on my worst enemy. It's so cruel. It's taken away the majority of my independence.'

The FA has affected her entire nervous system and spinal cord tissues. She has trouble in concentrating, speaking and she fatigues easily. It is also hard for her to control her arms and legs.

Living with her nan, Yvonne and Uncle Norm, the trio were grateful to learn the NDIS existed and it could help support them.

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**'The NDIS has done wonders. I can't thank them enough. They've given me a new way to see life around me for the best,' Tanesha said.**

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Living on Awabakal land, Tanesha has used her NDIS funding to engage a mix of services, including culturally appropriate providers. Through those services, Tanesha receives home, personal and community supports. She takes part in regular physical activities and receives occupational and physio therapies. She also has a range of assistive technologies to help keep her active.

'I've got a 360 Magic Mobility wheelchair. It's great. It goes anywhere,' she said.

'I love going shopping, so my support worker Edie and I use it to go to Charlestown shopping centre. I also like going to the beach, even if it's just to watch the waves.'

Tanesha said the support she receives has helped her feel much more positive about life.

## Section 2: Participant and family/carer outcomes



The NDIS is having a positive impact on the lives of participants, and their families and carers.

### 2.1 Measuring outcomes

Reports on annual outcomes and specific outcome areas such as employment are publicly available.

#### Outcomes framework questionnaires

The results in this section are based on responses provided by participants and their families and carers to the outcomes framework questionnaires. These questionnaires collect information on how participants and their families and carers are progressing in different areas (domains) of their lives.

Responses are collected at Scheme entry (“baseline”) and at subsequent plan reassessments, allowing progress to be tracked over a participant's time in the Scheme.

#### Reporting on outcomes

Information collected from the current outcomes framework questionnaires is used to contribute to a range of publicly available reports and data cubes.<sup>18,19,20,21</sup>

18 Annual outcomes reports for Participants, for family and carers, and dashboards by geographical area: <https://data.ndis.gov.au/reports-and-analyses/outcomes-and-goals/participant-families-and-carer-outcomes-reports>.

19 Analysis focusing on employment outcomes: <https://data.ndis.gov.au/reports-and-analyses/outcomes-and-goals/employment-outcomes-participants-their-families-and-carers>.

20 Analysis focusing on health and wellbeing: <https://data.ndis.gov.au/reports-and-analyses/outcomes-and-goals/health-and-wellbeing-ndis-participants-and-their-families-and-carers>.

21 Quarterly data cubes containing baseline and longitudinal results for key indicators: <https://data.ndis.gov.au/data-downloads>.

## 2.2 Participation in work and community and social activities<sup>22,23</sup>

Despite COVID-19, participation rates in community and social activities have increased, while the overall rate of participation in work is stable.

### Participation in community and social activities

Participants who have been in the Scheme for at least two years have seen their community and social participation increase, since they first entered. Specifically, comparing responses at the most recent plan reassessment (between two and seven years after entry) with responses at Scheme entry<sup>24</sup>:

- **six** percentage point increase from **34%** to **40%** for participants aged 15 to 24 years.
- **nine** percentage point increase from **35%** to **45%** for participants aged 25 to 34 years.
- **seven** percentage point increase from **35%** to **43%** for participants aged 35 to 44 years.
- **seven** percentage point increase from **35%** to **42%** for participants aged 45 to 54 years.
- **five** percentage point increase from **35%** to **40%** for participants aged 55 to 64 years.
- **six** percentage point increase from **36%** to **42%** for participants aged 65 years and older.
- **seven percentage point increase from 35% to 42% for participants aged 15 years and older.**

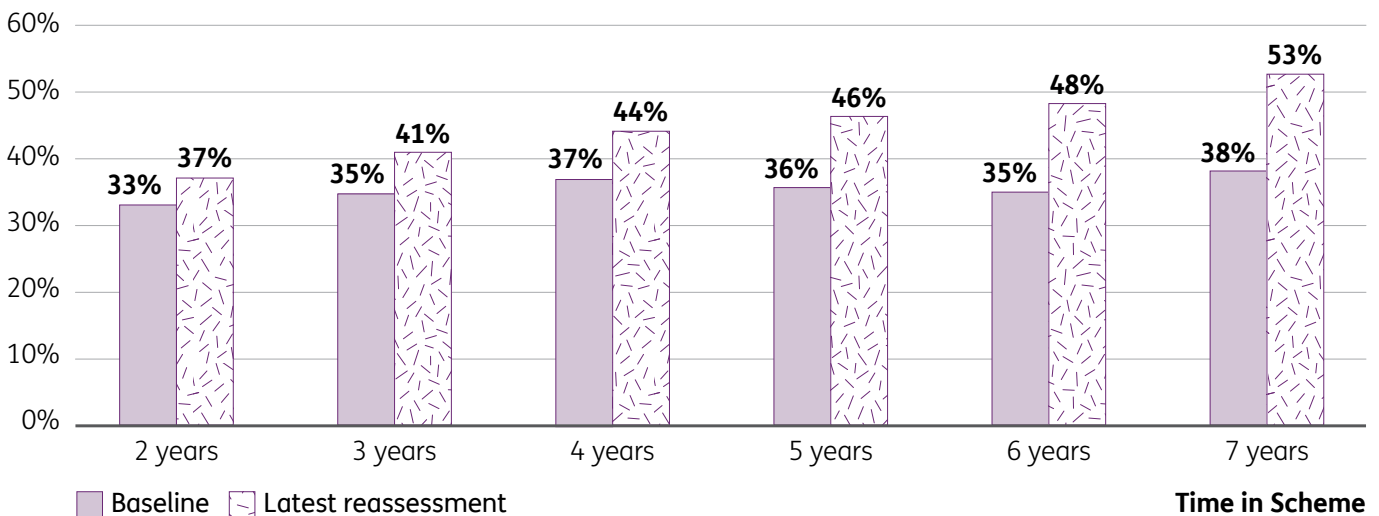
The overall result of 42 per cent compares to a 2023–24 target of 46 per cent.

In general, the increase in participation in community and social activities has improved the longer participants have been in the Scheme.

Combining all age groups<sup>25</sup>, the increase for participants who have been in the Scheme for two years was four percentage points (from 33 per cent to 37 per cent), and the increase for participants who have been in the Scheme for seven years is 14 percentage points (from 38 per cent to 53 per cent).

Figure 6: Percentage change in the participation rate in social activities

#### Participants aged 15 years and over



22 This section compares Baseline indicator results when participants entered the Scheme, with results measured at the most recent participant plan reassessment for each respondent. Trial participants are excluded.

23 The participant age reported in this section is as per their latest plan reassessment.

24 Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole percentage; differences are calculated from unrounded metrics.

25 Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole percentage; differences are calculated from unrounded metrics.

### Participation in work (percentage in a paid job)

The percentage in a paid job for those in the Scheme for at least two years continues to be relatively stable overall. However, the percentage and the change over time in the Scheme differs by age group. For instance, the largest percentage increase was for participants in the 15 to 24 age group, consistent with participants entering the workforce for the first time. The percentage in a paid job remains stable or declines for all other age bands. Specifically, comparing responses at the most recent plan reassessment (between two to seven years after entry) with responses at Scheme entry<sup>26</sup>:

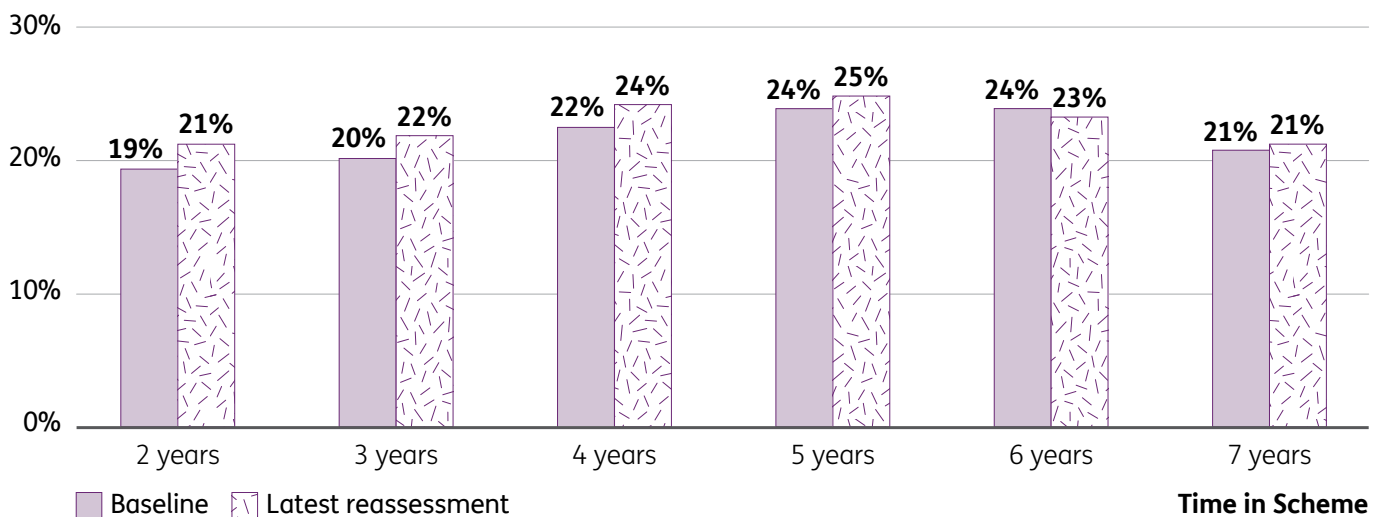
- **eleven** percentage point increase from **10%** to **22%** for participants aged 15 to 24 years.<sup>27</sup>
- **one** percentage point increase from **27%** to **29%** for participants aged 25 to 34 years.
- **one** percentage point decrease from **28%** to **27%** for participants aged 35 to 44 years.
- **two** percentage point decrease from **25%** to **23%** for participants aged 45 to 54 years.
- **four** percentage point decrease from **19%** to **15%** for participants aged 55 to 64 years.<sup>28</sup>
- **four** percentage point decrease from **13%** to **8%** for participants aged 65 years and older.<sup>29</sup>
- **two percentage point increase from 21% to 23% for participants aged 15–64 years.**

The overall result of 23 per cent compares to a 2023–24 target of 26 per cent.

For participants who are of working age (15 to 64), the percentage in work has increased slightly from 19 per cent to 21 per cent - for those who have been in the Scheme for two years. For participants who have been in the Scheme for seven years, the percentage of participants in work has remained stable at 21 per cent.

Figure 7: Change in the percentage of participants in work

#### Participants aged 15 to 64 years



<sup>26</sup> Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole percentage; differences are calculated from unrounded metrics.

<sup>27</sup> Some of the increase is due to participants leaving school and starting work. As the Scheme matures it will be possible to analyse the extent to which the percentage gap increases.

<sup>28</sup> Some of the decrease for older age groups is due to participants retiring from the workforce.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

### Family/carer employment rate

It should be noted that the global COVID-19 pandemic that took hold from early 2020 has had an impact on family/carer employment (and other indicators).

The percentage of parents/carers in a paid job for participants who have been in the Scheme for at least two years has improved over time. Specifically, comparing responses at the most recent plan reassessment (between two and seven years after entry) with responses at Scheme entry, there has been a<sup>30</sup>:

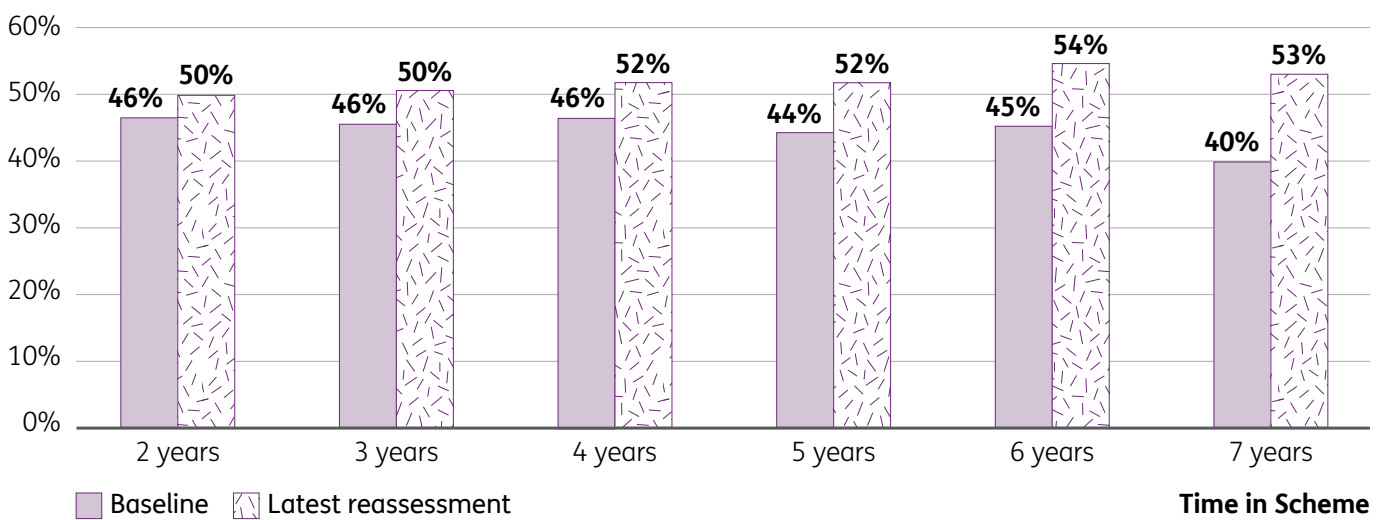
- **six** percentage point increase from **46%** to **51%** for parents/carers of participants aged 0 to 14 years
- **two** percentage point increase from **47%** to **48%** for parents/carers of participants aged 15 years and over.

Overall, for parents/carers of all participants, there has been a five per cent increase, from 46 to 50 per cent, reaching the 2023–24 target of 50 per cent.

Considering all families and carers of participants of all ages in the Scheme for at least two years, larger improvements in the percentage in work are seen where the participant has been in the Scheme for longer. For instance, 46 per cent of those who have been in the Scheme for two years were in work at baseline, compared to 50 per cent at second reassessment. Those in the Scheme for seven years improved from 40 per cent to 53 per cent.

Figure 8: Change in the percentage of families and carers of participants in work

#### Families and carers of participants of all ages



30 Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole percentage; differences are calculated from unrounded metrics.



## 2.3 Perceptions of whether the NDIS has helped

Participants have positive perceptions across most domains and different age groups. However, the percentage of positive responses varies by domain and age group.

At each plan reassessment, participants are asked whether the NDIS has helped with areas related to each domain. For these questions, longitudinal change is measured from first plan reassessment, since the Scheme has not had an opportunity to help at baseline. Results shown in this section compare responses provided at the first plan reassessment with those from later reassessments, for participants entering the Scheme since 1 July 2016 and who have been in the Scheme for at least two years.

### Participant choice and control

The choice and control metric for participants aged 15 and over is based on the question “Has the NDIS helped you have more choices and more control over your life?”

Positive perceptions of whether the NDIS has helped with choice and control have increased for the latest reassessment compared to the first reassessment across all age bands. Older participants tend to have higher levels of satisfaction than the 15 to 24 age group. Specifically, the percentage who think that the NDIS has helped them have more choices and more control over their life showed<sup>31</sup>:

- **nine** percentage point increase from **61%** to **70%** for participants aged 15 to 24 years
- **eleven** percentage point increase from **66%** to **78%** for participants aged 25 to 34 years
- **ten** percentage point increase from **69%** to **79%** for participants aged 35 to 44 years
- **ten** percentage point increase from **70%** to **80%** for participants aged 45 to 54 years
- **ten** percentage point increase from **71%** to **81%** for participants aged 55 to 64 years
- **twelve** percentage point increase from **71%** to **83%** for participants aged 65 years and older
- **ten percentage point increase from 67% to 77% for participants aged 15 years and older.**

Overall, for participants aged 15 and over, there has been a 10 percentage points increase, from 67 per cent to 77 per cent. This compares to a 2023–24 target of 75 per cent.

31 Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole percentage; differences are calculated from unrounded metrics.

### Other “Has the NDIS helped?” questions

For children aged from birth to before starting school, results have improved across all domains.

Figure 9 shows the percentages responding positively at first assessment and at latest reassessment, as well as the change between the two time points.

Figure 9: “Has the NDIS helped?” – participants aged from birth to before starting school<sup>32</sup>

Domain	First assessment %	Latest reassessment %	Percentage point change
Daily living: child’s development	91	94	+3
Daily living: access to specialist services	92	95	+3
Choice and control (child’s ability to communicate what they want)	83	87	+4
Relationships (fitting into family life)	77	83	+6
Social, community and civic participation (fitting into community life)	63	70	+7

Improvements were slightly stronger for fitting into family and community life (although results for these domains started off at a lower level and hence had more scope to improve).

For children aged from starting school to age 14, results are generally less positive than for the younger age group but show stronger improvement over time.

Figure 10 shows the percentages responding positively at first assessment and at latest reassessment, as well as the change between the two time points.

Figure 10: “Has the NDIS helped?” – participants from starting school to age 14<sup>33</sup>

Domain	First assessment %	Latest reassessment %	Percentage point change
Daily living (independence)	62	73	+12
Lifelong learning (access to education)	42	51	+10
Relationships (with family and friends)	50	60	+10
Social, community and civic participation (social and recreational life)	45	53	+7

<sup>32</sup> Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole percentage; differences are calculated from unrounded metrics.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid

For young adults aged 15 to 24 years, Figure 11 shows the percentages responding positively at first assessment and at latest reassessment, as well as the change between the two time points.

Figure 11: “Has the NDIS helped?” – participants aged 15 to 24<sup>34</sup>

Domain	First assessment %	Latest reassessment %	Percentage point change
Choice and control	61	70	+9
Daily living	61	72	+11
Relationships	50	54	+5
Home	22	21	-1
Health and wellbeing	44	51	+7
Lifelong learning	36	37	+1
Work	18	17	-1
Social, community and civic participation	55	62	+7

From Figure 11, the largest improvement over time in the Scheme has been observed for the daily living domain (+11 percentage point change). Strong improvements have also been observed for choice and control (+9), relationships (+5), health and wellbeing (+7) and social, community and civic participation (+7). Lifelong learning showed a marginal increase (+1), and there were slight declines for home and work.

For participants aged 25 years and over, perceptions tend to be more positive than for those aged 15 to 24, and the older adult group also shows a stronger improvement over time. Figure 12 shows the percentages responding positively at first assessment and latest reassessment, as well as the change between the two time points.

34 Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole percentage; differences are calculated from unrounded metrics.

Figure 12: “Has the NDIS helped?” – participants aged 25 and over<sup>35</sup>

Domain	First assessment %	Latest reassessment %	Percentage point change
Choice and control	69	80	+11
Daily living	73	84	+11
Relationships	53	62	+9
Home	31	35	+5
Health and wellbeing	52	61	+9
Lifelong learning	30	32	+2
Work	19	19	0
Social, community and civic participation	59	70	+10

From Figure 12, the largest improvements over time in the Scheme have been observed for daily living (+11 percentage point change), and choice and control (+11). Strong improvements have also been observed for relationships (+9), health and wellbeing (+9) and social, community and civic participation (+10). By contrast with the younger adult group, there was an improvement for the home domain (+5). Similar to the younger adult group, lifelong learning showed a marginal increase (+2), and there was no material change for work.<sup>36</sup>

### Results continue to improve with time in Scheme

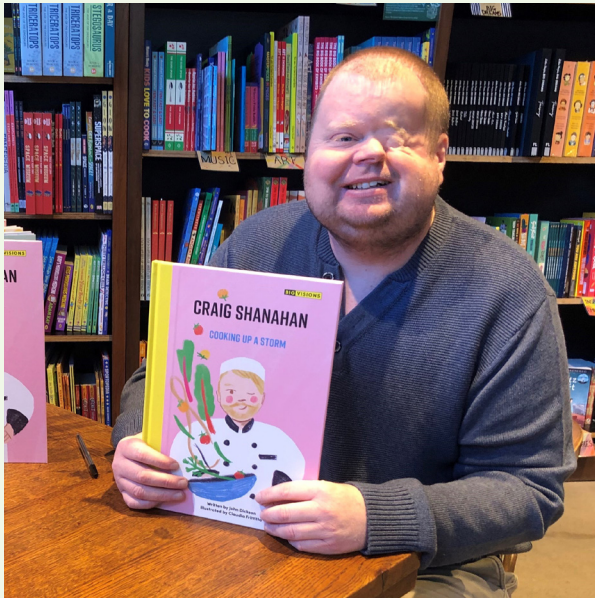
Responses tend to become more positive the longer a participant has been in the Scheme.

While these results are encouraging, the analysis also indicates that there are areas where outcomes could be improved. For example, for participants aged 25 and over, after at least two years in the Scheme, only 19 per cent agreed that being in the NDIS had helped them find a suitable job, almost unchanged from their first plan reassessment.

The NDIA is actively working to improve participation in work, as discussed earlier in this section.

<sup>35</sup> Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole percentage; differences are calculated from unrounded metrics.

<sup>36</sup> Noting that the education and housing systems have a major role to play in the lifelong learning and home domains.



## Chef Craig publishes a children's book

Based in Penrith, Craig is a blind chef who spent 15 years working in some of Sydney's finest restaurants before establishing his own award-winning eatery, The Blind Chef Café and Dessert Bar, in 2020.

Last year, the NDIS participant joined with Vision Australia to publish a children's book about his life, *Cooking up a Storm*.

At the age of 2, doctors removed Craig's right eye after he was diagnosed with rhabdomyosarcoma, an aggressive form of cancer. Managing his education with a vision impairment was a challenge Craig happily took on until he found his calling in life.

'By the time I was in Year 10, I discovered my passion for cooking,' Craig said. 'I wanted to get an apprenticeship, but I had a few challenges with the fact I had one eye.'

After completing a TAFE course in commercial cookery, Craig landed an apprenticeship at a local Italian restaurant. 'Getting my foot in the door was the hardest part,' Craig said. 'Once I got the job, I had no problems getting future employment.'

However, just as his career was taking off, Craig suffered another major setback. In 2014, Craig's cancer had returned, damaging the optic nerve in his right eye. After surgery, he was left with 6 per cent of his vision.

Two years later, Craig became an NDIS participant and began to use his supports so he could return to the kitchen. Craig completed a Diploma of Advanced Hospitality Management before opening The Blind Chef Café and Dessert Bar in Penrith. 'Owning my own café was always a dream but it was also a solution to getting myself into work again,' Craig said.

With his NDIS supports in place, Craig's café thrived, and he was awarded the Blind Australian of the Year employer of the year award.

Not-for-profit organisation Vision Australia heard about Craig's success and asked him to feature in their Big Vision book series, sold online and through Big W. The book is also available in braille.

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**'The message from the book is that your disability doesn't need to stop you from achieving your goals.'**

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## Section 3: Participant experience



The NDIA's Service Charter sets out the delivery standards for what the Agency is doing to meet participants expectations.

### 3.1 Participant Service Improvement Plan

Progress is being made against the Participant Service Improvement Plan (SIP) deliverables.

The NDIA is committed to improving service for NDIS participants. That is why the NDIA introduced a Participant Service Charter to outline what participants can expect from the NDIA, and the SIP that details all the improvements the NDIA will make.

The NDIA Participant Service Charter sets out what participants can expect from the NDIA and Partners in the Community (PITC) organisations. It provides overall principles for interactions with participants, and clear service standards and timeframes. These are included in the Participant Service Guarantee (PSG).

The Participant Service Charter is also underpinned by the specific tangible actions listed in the SIP.

The NDIA's SIP is the key to making real the promises in the Participant Service Charter and PSG. It sets out what the NDIA and partners are going to do to deliver a NDIS that meets expectations.<sup>37</sup>

The Participant Service Charter is based on five principles for engagement with participants.

Engagement principle	What you can expect
<b>Transparent</b>	We will make it easy to access and understand our information and decisions.
<b>Responsive</b>	We will respond to individual needs and circumstances.
<b>Respectful</b>	We will recognise your individual experience and acknowledge you are an expert in your own life.
<b>Empowering</b>	We will make it easy to access information and be supported by the NDIS to lead your life.
<b>Connected</b>	We will support you to access the services and supports you need.

An outline of the activities underway as part of the SIP and an update on progress can be found on the [NDIS website](#)<sup>38</sup>. The SIP activities are aligned to each of the 'what you can expect' statements in the Participant Service Charter. While the list is not exhaustive, the NDIA is continually looking for opportunities to improve our participant service in line with the engagement principles.

<sup>37</sup> Work is currently underway to develop a qualitative measurement framework and dashboard to report on the NDIA's performance against the engagement principles (and associated 'we will' commitments), as set out in the Participant Service Charter.

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.ndis.gov.au/about-us/policies/service-charter/participant-service-improvement-plan>

### 3.2 Participant Service Guarantee

The latest quarter shows notable improvements in the service standard experience across a number of the measurable Participant Service Guarantee (PSG) metrics.

#### Performance against the service standards – September 2023<sup>39</sup>

The NDIA commenced measuring performance against the PSG prior to passing the Participant Service Charter and Guarantee legislation, and these results have been published in prior quarterly reports. The legislation focuses on improving participant experience and builds on the recommendations of the 2019 Tune Review. It legislates the PSG (from 1 July 2023) and introduces changes that provide greater flexibility for participants and the NDIA to vary plans.

In the September 2023 quarter, 9 out of the 17 (53 per cent) PSG timeframes were met in 95 per cent of cases, compared to 12 out of 17 (71 per cent in the June quarter and 10 out of 17 (59 per cent in the March quarter.

PSG	Service type	Description of the service being guaranteed	Service Guarantee	Performance in the September 2023 quarter	Comparison to target of 95%	Change from last quarter
1	General	Explain a previous decision, after a request for explanation is received	28 days	97%	●	↔
2	Access	Make an access decision, or request for more information, after an access request has been received	21 days	100%	●	↔
3	Access	Allow sufficient time for prospective participants to provide information, after NDIA has requested further information	90 days	100%	●	↑
4	Access	Make an access decision, after more information has been provided.	14 days	91%	▲	↓
5	Planning	Commence facilitating the preparation of a plan, after an access decision has been made	21 days	95%	●	↔
6	Planning	Approve a participant's plan, after an access decision has been made (excludes those Early Childhood Approach that have received initial supports)	56 days	93%	▲	↔

**Comparison to target of 95%** ● 95% and over ▲ 85%-95% ■ Less than 85%

**Change from last quarter** ↑ More than 3 percentage points higher ↔ Within 3 percentage points ↓ More than 3 percentage points lower

<sup>39</sup> PSG 8, PSG 10 and PSG 16 will be reported in 2024 as the new ICT system is implemented.

## Section three: Participant experience

PSG	Service type	Description of the service being guaranteed	Service Guarantee	Performance in the September 2023 quarter	Comparison to target of 95%	Change from last quarter
7	Planning	Approve a plan for ECA participants, after an access decision has been made	90 days	97%	●	↔
9	Implementation	If the participant accepts the offer, hold a plan implementation meeting	28 days	100%	●	↔
11	Plan reassessment	Commence facilitating a scheduled plan reassessment, prior to the scheduled reassessment date	56 days	73%	■	↔
12	Plan reassessment	Decide whether to undertake a Participant Requested Plan reassessment, after the request is received	21 days	72%	■	↓
13	Plan reassessment	Complete a reassessment, after the decision to accept the request was made	28 days	64%	■	↔
14	Plan variations	Amend a plan, after the receipt of information that triggers the plan amendment process	28 days	93%	▲	↔
15	Plan variations	Amend a plan, after receipt of information relating to a complex quote that triggers a plan amendment process	50 days	88%	▲	↓
17	Reviewable decisions	Complete an internal Review of a Reviewable Decision (RoRD), after a request is received	60 days	94%	▲	↓
18	Reviewable decisions	Implement an AAT decision to amend a plan, after the AAT decision is made	28 days	99%	●	↔
19	Nominee	Cancel participant requested nominee	14 days	97%	●	↔
20	Nominee	Cancel CEO initiated nominee	14 days	97%	●	↔

\* Note: The NDIA's participant check-in process ensures that every scheduled reassessment begins with contact from the planner or partner to discuss reassessment options well before any scheduled reassessment date. Plans are extended automatically if they have not been reassessed before expiry so participants have continuity of support. That is, participants do not stop receiving supports.

**Comparison to target of 95%** ● 95% and over ▲ 85%-95% ■ Less than 85%

**Change from last quarter** ↑ More than 3 percentage points higher ↔ Within 3 percentage points ↓ More than 3 percentage points lower



### PSG metrics below target

Further detail around the eight PSG timeframes that were not met in 95 per cent of cases are as follows:

- **PSG 4 – Make an access decision, after more information has been provided:** The metric is at **91%** and is below target. This is partly due to an intake of new assessors being trained. In some instances, decisions can be delayed due to specialist advice.
- **PSG 6 – Approve a participant's plan, after an access decision has been made (excludes ECA):** The metric is at **93%** and is slightly below target. The NDIA is reviewing and manually assigning records on a weekly basis.
- **PSG 11 – Commence facilitating a scheduled plan reassessment, prior to the scheduled reassessment date:** The metric is at **73%** and is below target. Performance has been impacted by the volume of first plan and Plan Reassessment Request (PRR) appointments.
- **PSG 12 – Decide whether to undertake a Participant Requested Plan reassessment, after the request is received, PSG 13 – Complete a reassessment, after the decision to accept the request was made:** There has been an increase in the number of unscheduled reviews requested which has resulted in a decrease in the resulting performance metrics for PSG 12 and PSG 13 over recent quarters. The NDIA is reviewing the ability to balance this with other key priority areas and is actioning the allocation of additional staff and operational changes.
- **PSG 14 – Amend a plan, after the receipt of information that triggers the plan amendment process:** The metric is at **93%** which is an improvement on last quarter. The metric is below target, partly due to a business process error where plan changes were incorrectly being categorised as amendments. Weekly communications being sent to business areas are improving performance.
- **PSG 15 – Amend a plan, after receipt of information relating to a complex quote that triggers a plan amendment process:** The metric is at **88%** and is below target. The sample size for this PSG is small and a small number of amendments can have a significant impact on results.
- **PSG 17 – Complete an internal Review of a Reviewable Decision, after a request is received:** The metric is at **94%** and is slightly below target. There has been an increase in the volume of internal review requests (s100) since May especially for access decisions. This is as a result of increased eligibility reassessments being completed. The Branch has implemented strategies to bring performance back in line with KPIs from the end of September.

### 3.3 Home and Living Decisions

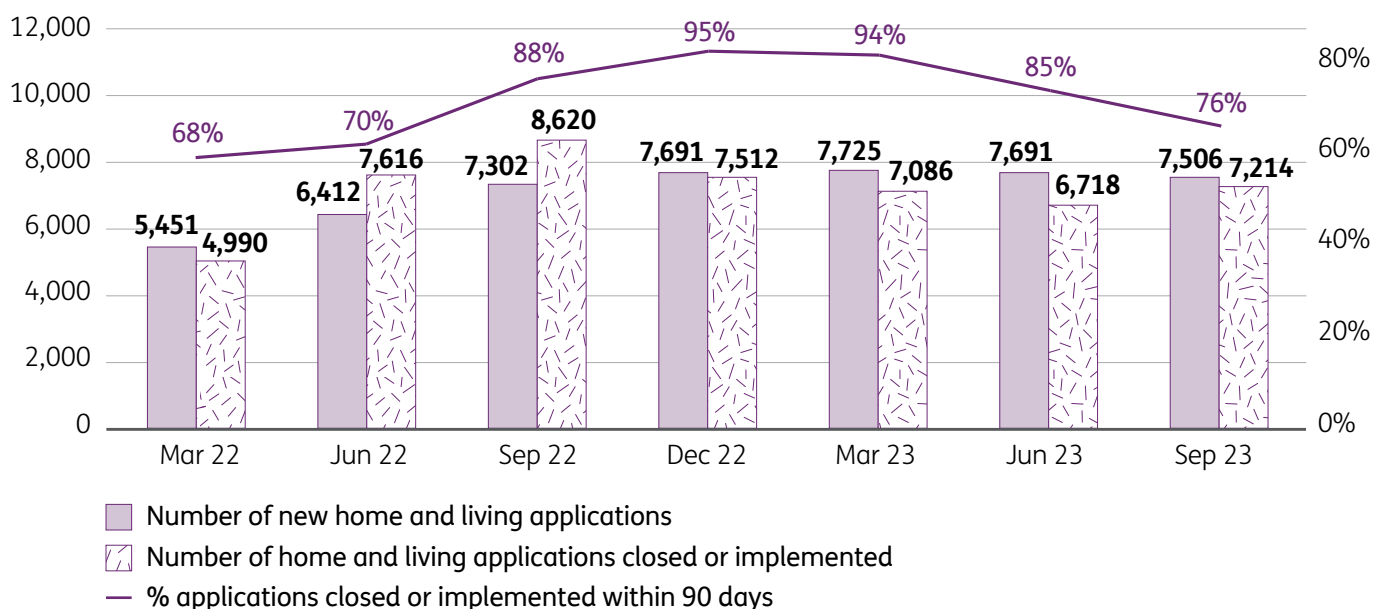
The volume of Home and Living applications continues to be high with the aim of improving participant experience.

The end-to-end process duration for Home and Living (H&L) applications tracks the time taken from receipt of Home and Living application form through to plan implementation.<sup>40</sup>

All Home and Living applications are prioritised based on an Escalation and Prioritisation Matrix to ensure the best interests of participants in relation to risks associated with safety, quality and outcomes are effectively managed.

The number of new Home and Living applications received each quarter has continued to remain high, with 7,506 applications received in the September 2023 quarter. This compares to a quarterly average of 7,602 new requests over the previous 12 months. In the September 2023 quarter, 7,214 Home and Living applications were closed or implemented and 76 per cent (4,099) were finalised within 90 days.<sup>41,42</sup>

Figure 13: Home and Living applications – New, closed and % closed within 90 days<sup>43</sup>



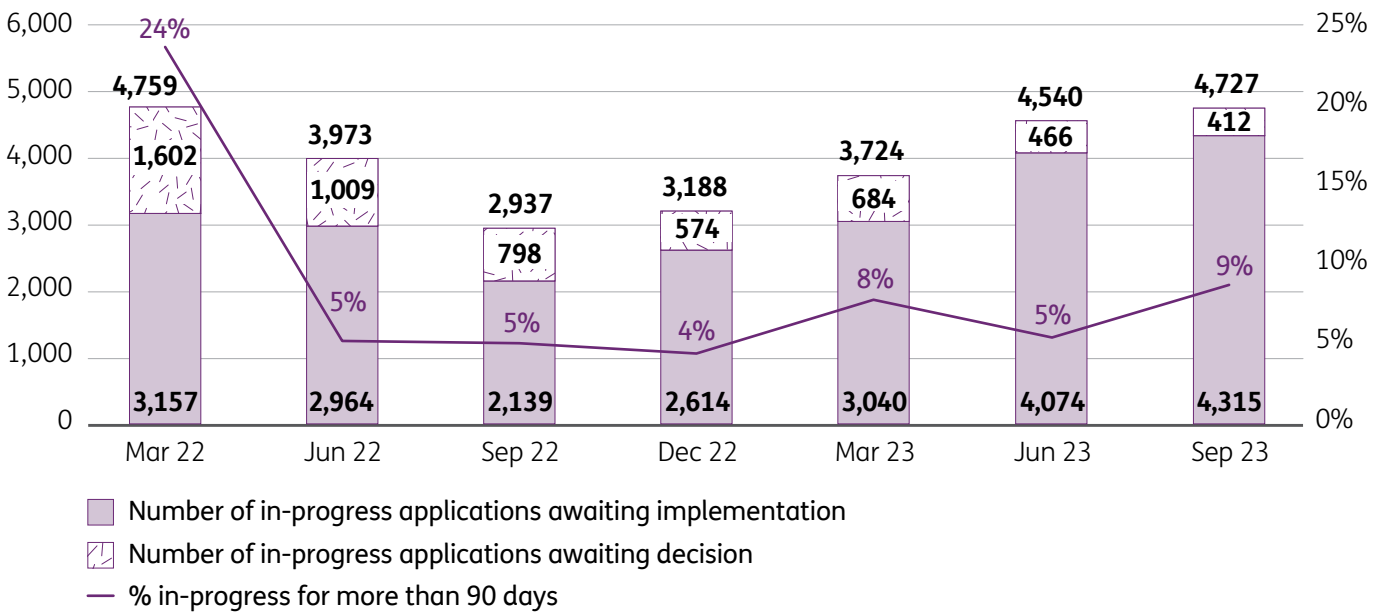
40 The time taken for participants to respond to requests for further information (RFI) has been removed from the duration.  
 41 An application is considered closed if an application is cancelled or rejected, a participant is declined all Home and Living supports, or an application won't progress to implementation (e.g. deceased, participant chooses not to proceed etc.). An application is considered implemented once a participant has a new approved Plan.  
 42 1,848 of the 7,214 application that were closed or implemented had no data on the closure date and were excluded from the percentage of applications closed or implemented within 90 days.  
 43 Applications that have been closed or implemented with no data on the closure date have been excluded from the percentages of applications closed or implemented within 90 days.

Section three: Participant experience

Continued high volume of new home and living applications has resulted in a higher number of in-progress applications each quarter, with 4,727 applications in-progress as at 30 September 2023. Of the in-progress applications as at 30 September 2023, 4,315<sup>44</sup> were waiting for a decision, while a further 412 were waiting for supports to be implemented in a plan. As at 30 September 2023, 70 per cent or 3,296 in-progress applications have been flagged as relating to PRR or RoRD requests.

Over the past quarter, the NDIA has commenced implementation of the Independent Living Initiative which was part of the 2023-2024 Commonwealth Reform for Outcomes budget measures. This participant centric initiative aims to support consistent, equitable and quality home and living decisions which are aligned with the best interests of participants and their families. The majority of home and living applications are now reviewed and endorsed prior to approval within a Complex Assessment Meeting which incorporates a specialist home and living delegate. This continuous improvement initiative has impacted the average decision time per home and living application at the same time as moderating growth in the number of SIL participants over the past quarter. This initiative, together with the high volumes of new home and living applications, has contributed to the proportion that have remained in-progress for more than 90 days increasing from 5 per cent as at 30 June 2023 to 9 per cent as at 30 September 2023.<sup>45</sup>

Figure 14: Home and Living applications – in-progress awaiting decision or implementation, % in-progress for more than 90 days<sup>46</sup>



44 The NDIA is waiting on additional information from participants for 518 out of the 4,315 applications awaiting a decision at the end of September.  
 45 The Operations and Support Division are continuing to investigate open applications to ensure next steps are underway for Participants as part of an ongoing process.  
 46 Applications on hold are excluded from the in-progress applications.

### 3.4 Complaints, Participant Critical Incidents, Review Requests and AAT Cases

The Agency is seeing a decrease in AAT cases and in recent quarters, an increase in RoRD cases and a higher complaints rate compared to prior quarters.

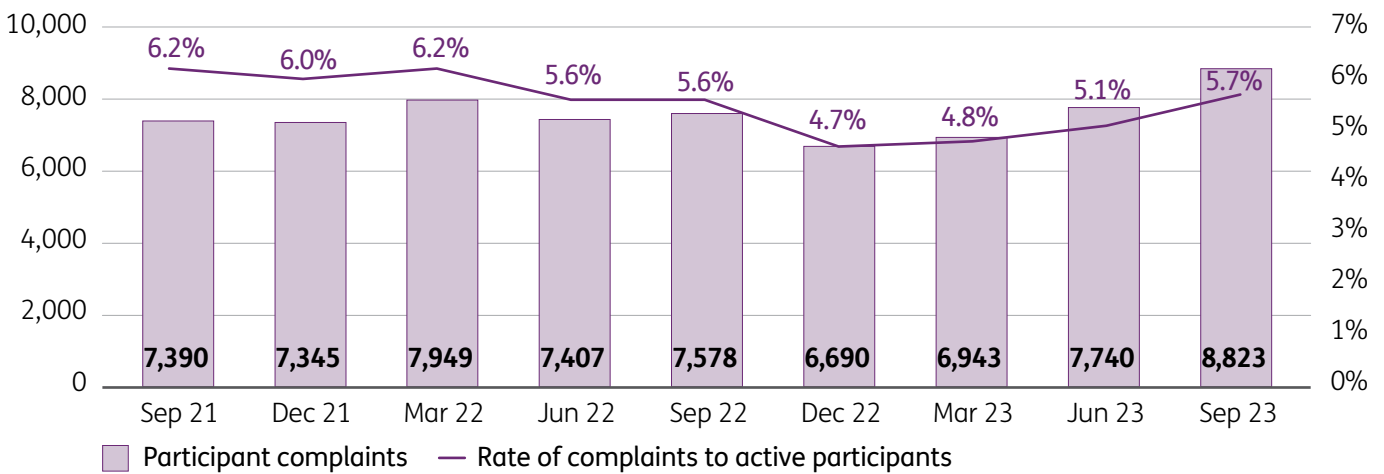
#### Complaints<sup>47</sup>

The Agency maintains a service standard under which it aims to resolve 90 per cent of complaints within 21 days after they are received. In the September 2023 quarter, there was an increase in complaints compared to the June 2023 quarter, which resulted in increased volumes and ageing work on hand. The Agency is prioritising ageing complaints for resolution.

Complaints as a proportion of active participants averaged 6.1% over the three quarters to March 2022, then improved to 4.7% by the December 2022 quarter. The complaint rate increased in the June 2023 quarter and increased again in the September 2023 quarter. A greater focus on the Agency as a result of the NDIS Review and the DRC may have contributed to increased complaints in recent quarters. As part of the national rollout, work continues on improving systems and processes throughout the NDIA, which will improve services and reduce complaints in future periods.

A further 216 complaints were received from providers over the quarter, which is equivalent to 2.1 per cent of registered providers making a complaint. This has reduced from a peak of 4.2 per cent in the March 2022 quarter.

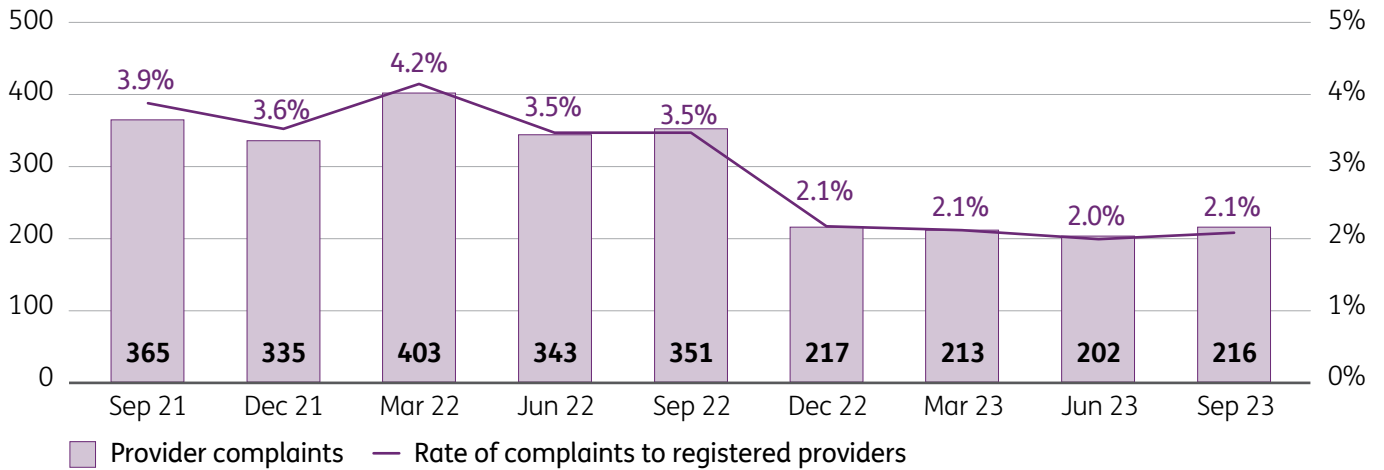
Figure 15: Number of proportion of participant (below) and provider (over page) complaints over time<sup>48</sup>



<sup>47</sup> Figures do not capture the 667 complaint records that have been migrated to the new ICT system, see section 6.6 for further information.

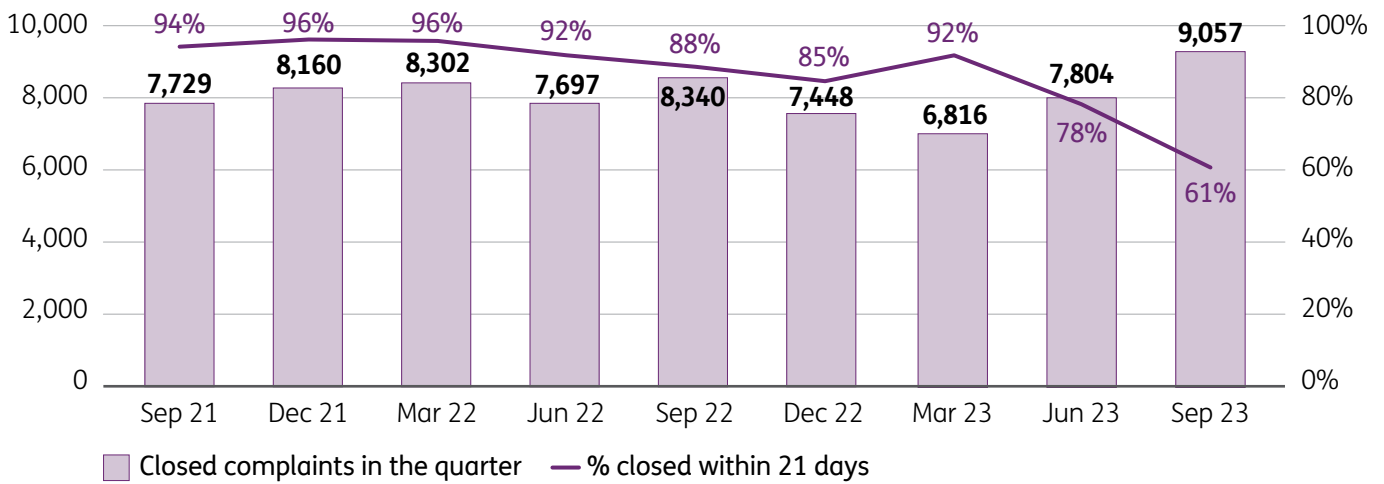
<sup>48</sup> In the 'My Customer Requests' tile launched in October 2019, it is possible to record multiple related parties as the source of a complaint and in some cases both participants and providers or other parties are linked to a single case. Previously, the single source was often recorded as a participant regardless of whether a provider was associated with the complaint.

Section three: Participant experience



Around 79 per cent of complaints have been closed within 21 days in the past four quarters, this proportion has declined from levels seen in 2021. The Agency is monitoring workloads and endeavours to close complaints as soon as possible. Work is underway to enhance complaint handling practices and systems and this work will contribute to more timely complaint resolutions in line with the PSG in coming quarters.

Figure 16: Closed complaints and percentage completed within 21-day timeframe<sup>49,50</sup>



The prioritisation of ageing complaints has resulted in an improvement in the percentage of complaints open for more than 21 days metric, from 13 per cent at June 2023 to 8 per cent in the September 2023 quarter.

49 The numbers of complaints reported for the most recent quarter may still increase to the extent there is a lag in data collection. However, any increase is not expected to have a material impact on the results.

50 The historical number of complaints reported prior to the June 2023 QRDM has changed due to Participant Critical Incidents being reported separately from the June 2023 QROM onwards, see later in the section for further details.

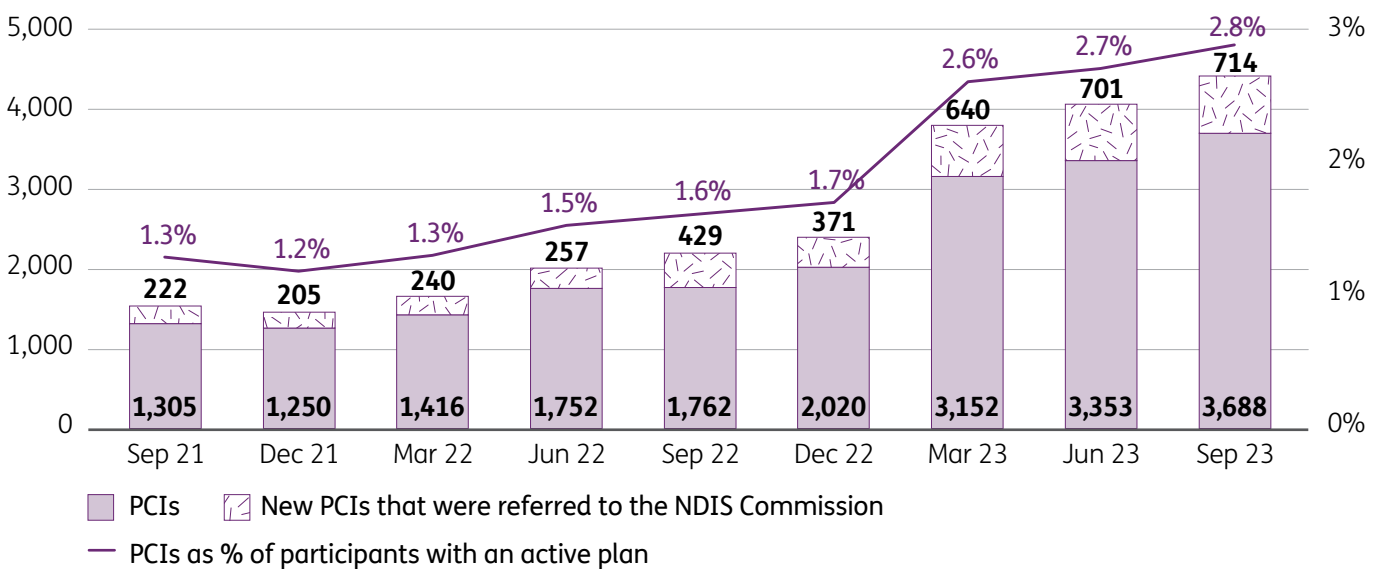
### Participant Critical Incidents (PCIs)

While working with participants, their families and carers, providers or mainstream services, NDIA staff and Partner staff may encounter circumstances or obtain information about allegations of harm occurring to a participant. After taking immediate safeguarding actions, staff and partners report a Participant Critical Incident (PCI). All PCI reports are prioritised for action based on the level of risk to the participant. Note that PCIs were captured in complaints data previously. They have been reported separately since June 2023.

There has been an increase in the total volume of PCIs received in recent quarters where the proportion of PCIs as a percentage of participants with an active plan has increased from approximately 1.5 per cent prior to December 2022 to 2.8 per cent in the most recent quarter. This increase has been due to an increased awareness of financial abuse in the community and improved reporting of PCIs over the last three quarters.

The largest contributor to PCIs in the September 2023 quarter related to abuse of a person with disability. Financial abuse made up 49 percent of these PCIs, with reports of self harm and neglect of a person with disability the next highest reported contributors respectively.

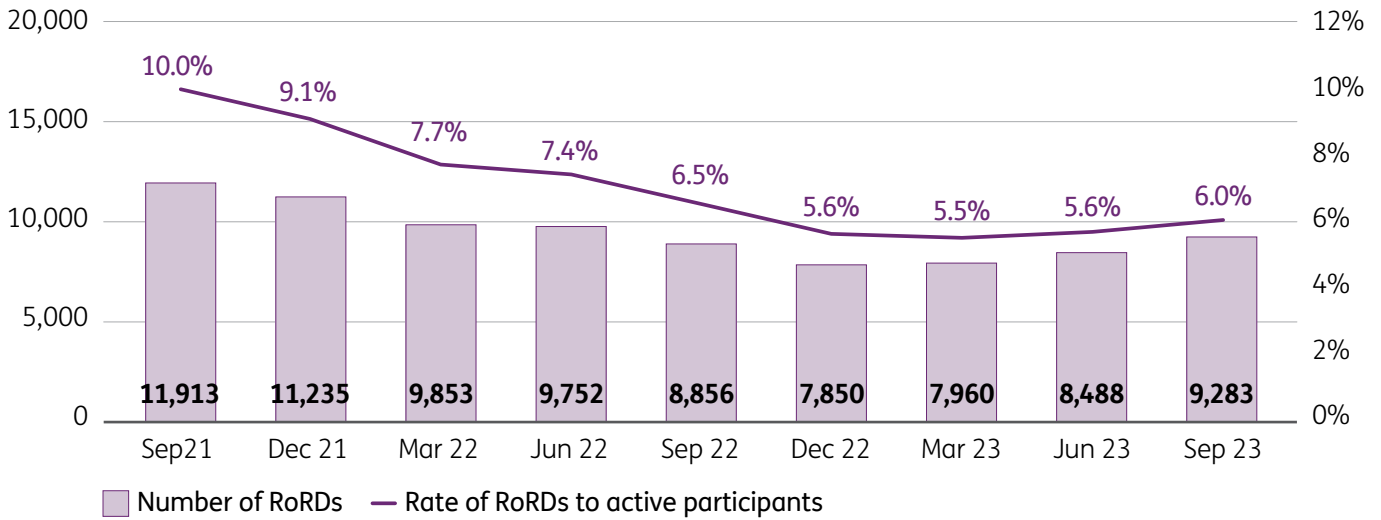
Figure 17: Number and proportion of PCIs



### Review of a Reviewable Decision (RoRD)

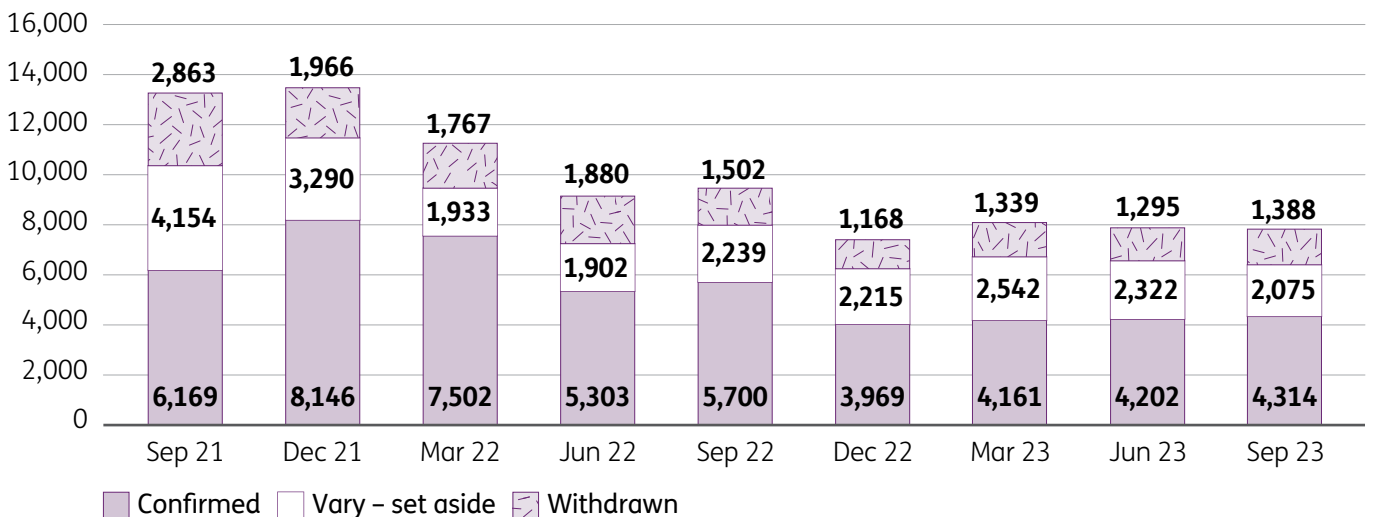
The number of RoRDs as a percentage of active participants has decreased from 10.0 per cent in the September 2021 quarter to 6.0 per cent in the September 2023 quarter.

Figure 18: Requests for a RoRD<sup>51</sup>



There were 7,777 RoRDs closed in the September 2023 quarter including 1,388 requests withdrawn. Of the remaining closed RoRDs, 4,314 confirmed the Agency's decision, meaning there was no change from the Agency's decision. Further, there were 2,075 decisions to amend or set aside the decision of the original decision maker. Decisions are often varied or set aside as further evidence is obtained during the review process.

Figure 19: Closed RoRDs by outcomes – quarterly trend<sup>52</sup>



51 The number of RoRDs have increased compared with the previous report due to better capture in the new ICT system.

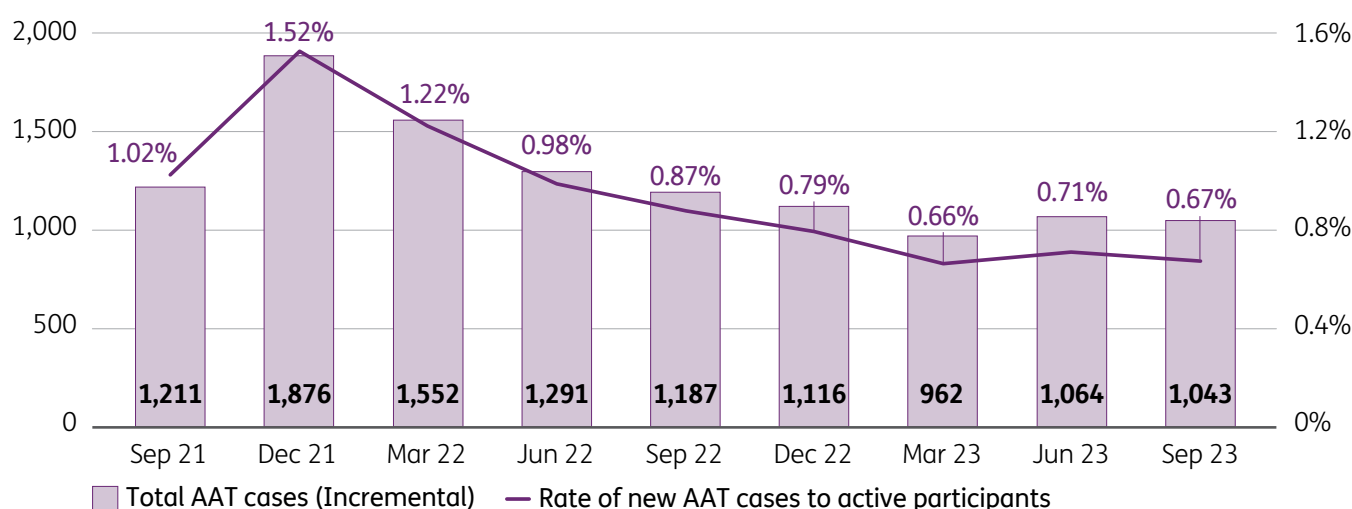
52 Ibid.

### Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT)

If a person is not satisfied with the outcome of their review, they may apply to the AAT for review of a decision made by a reviewer. The NDIA is committed to acting as a model litigant in the AAT as required by the Legal Services Directions 2017, and in doing so works with applicants and their legal representatives to resolve their matters as early as possible in the AAT process.<sup>53,54</sup>

There were 1,043 new AAT cases in the September 2023 quarter, relating to 1,027 participants. The number of new AAT cases (as a proportion of active participants) has decreased since the December 2021 peak of 1.52 per cent to 0.67 per cent in the September 2023 quarter. The decrease is a result of the IER trial which is one of the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) initiatives introduced to reduce the AAT case backlog and improve dispute resolution processes.

Figure 20: Number and proportion of new AAT cases



There have been 14,471 AAT cases closed since the commencement of the NDIS. Of those cases, 14,146 were resolved before a hearing, with the remaining 325 progressing to a substantive hearing and receiving a decision on a substantive legal issue.

Figure 21: AAT cases by open/closed and decision

	Number of cases <sup>55</sup>
<b>AAT Cases</b>	<b>17,370</b>
Open AAT Cases	2,899
Closed AAT Cases	14,471
Resolved before hearing	14,146
Gone to hearing and received a substantive decision	325

Of the cases no longer before the AAT, approximately 68 per cent were resolved by agreement, 27 per cent were withdrawn by the applicant or dismissed by the AAT and 2 per cent proceeded to a (substantive) hearing.<sup>56</sup>

53 As part of the AAT process, it is not uncommon for new requests to be made and for new evidence to be provided by applicants while their matters are in progress. This contributes to NDIS decisions being varied in the AAT.

54 Further information about the AAT process can be found on the AAT website: <https://www.aat.gov.au/apply-for-a-review/national-disability-insurance-scheme-ndis/can-we-help>

55 The AAT Cases are in respect of 15,792 unique participants.

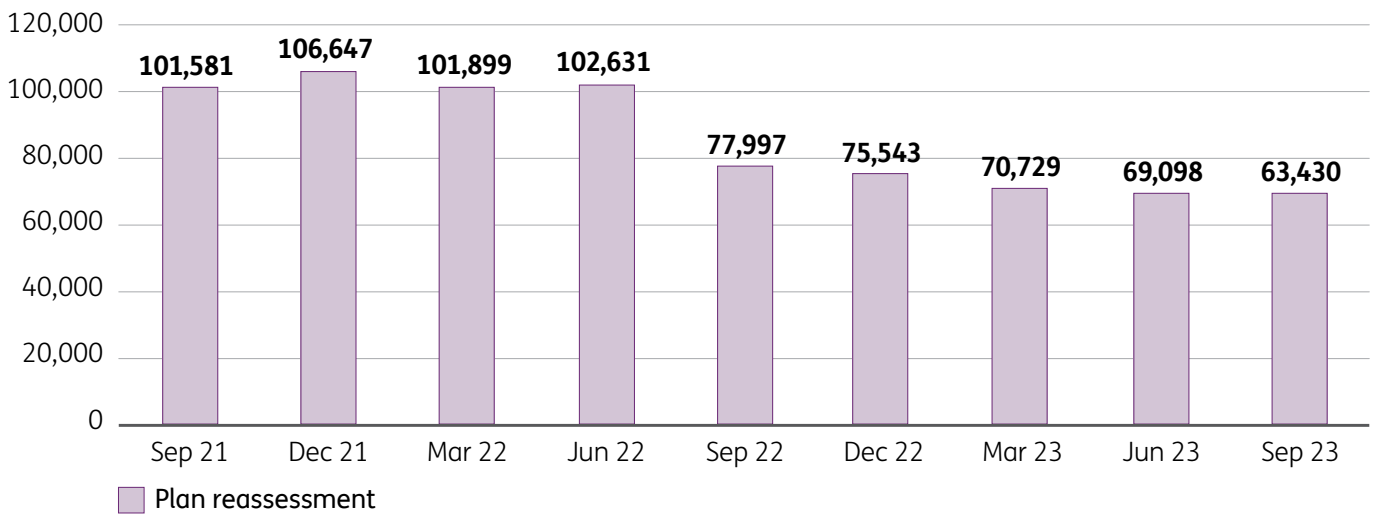
56 Less than 3 per cent of cases were related to applications for an extension of time which were declined by AAT or were not opposed by the Agency, matters over which AAT has no jurisdiction and reasons that were unspecified.



**Plan reassessments<sup>57</sup>**

There were 63,430 plan reassessments conducted in the September 2023 quarter. There has been a reduction in plan reassessments from the September 2022 quarter compared to the preceding four quarters due to a plan continuation strategy which involves communicating with the participant to ensure there have been no significant changes in circumstance and that the participant is in agreement with this approach. This has led to a lower volume of plan reassessments in the quarter. Of the 63,430 plan reassessments conducted in the September 2023 quarter, 37,188 (59 per cent) were initiated by the Agency and 26,242 (41 per cent) were requested by participants. Agency Initiated Plan Reassessments occur as plans are due to expire, and a new plan is required.

Figure 22: Number of plan reassessments<sup>58</sup>



**Pathway from plan reassessments and first or short plans to RoRDs and AATs<sup>59</sup>**

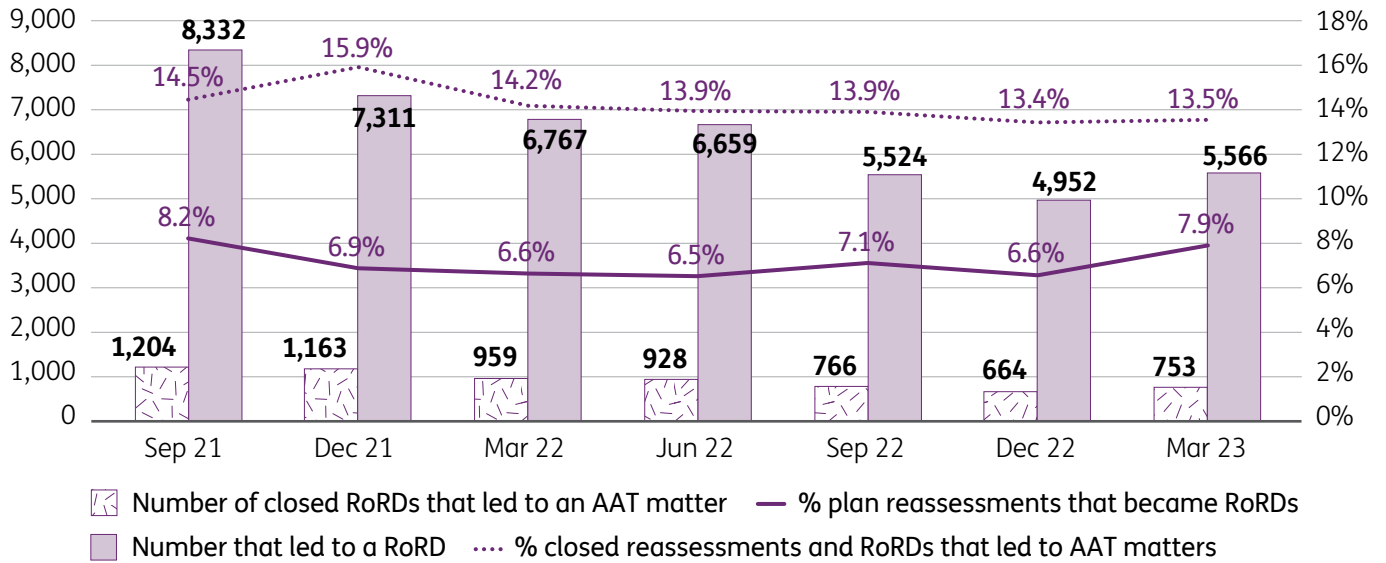
A participant may request a RoRD and then further appeal to the AAT. The following two figures show the pathway from plan reassessments to RoRDs and AAT cases between 1 September 2021 and 31 March 2023.

The proportion of RoRDs arising from plan reassessments as well as the proportion of AATs arising from RoRDs has been reducing in recent quarters:

- Plan reassessment related RoRDs have declined from a peak of **8.2% (8,332 RoRDs)** in the September 2021 quarter to **7.9% (5,566 RoRDs)** in the March 2023 quarter.
- Plan reassessment related AATs have declined from a peak of **15.9% (1,163 AATs)** in the December 2021 quarter to a low of **13.4% (664 AATs)** in the December 2022 quarter before increasing to **13.5% (753 AATs)** in the March 2023 quarter.

57 Figures do not capture the plan reassessment records that have been migrated to the new ICT system, see section 6.6 for further information.  
 58 Short plans (plans with duration less than or equal 30 days) have been excluded. The number of plan reassessments in historical periods have been updated with retrospective data changes.  
 59 Figures do not capture records that have been migrated to the new ICT system, see section 6.6 for further information.

Figure 23: Pathway from plan reassessment to RoRDs and AAT between 1 September 2021 and 31 March 2023 at 30 September 2023



### 3.5 Participant satisfaction

Participant satisfaction has remained in line with previous quarters.

This quarter, 86 per cent of participants rated the Planning process as either good or very good, with a further 9 per cent rating the experience as neutral. 77 per cent of the participants in the quarter rated the Access process as either good or very good, 80 per cent rated the Pre-Planning process as either good or very good, and 67 per cent rated the Plan Reassessment process as either good or very good.<sup>60</sup> This metric has remained steady at 67 per cent in the most recent quarter, following a two percentage point decrease from the March 2023 quarter.

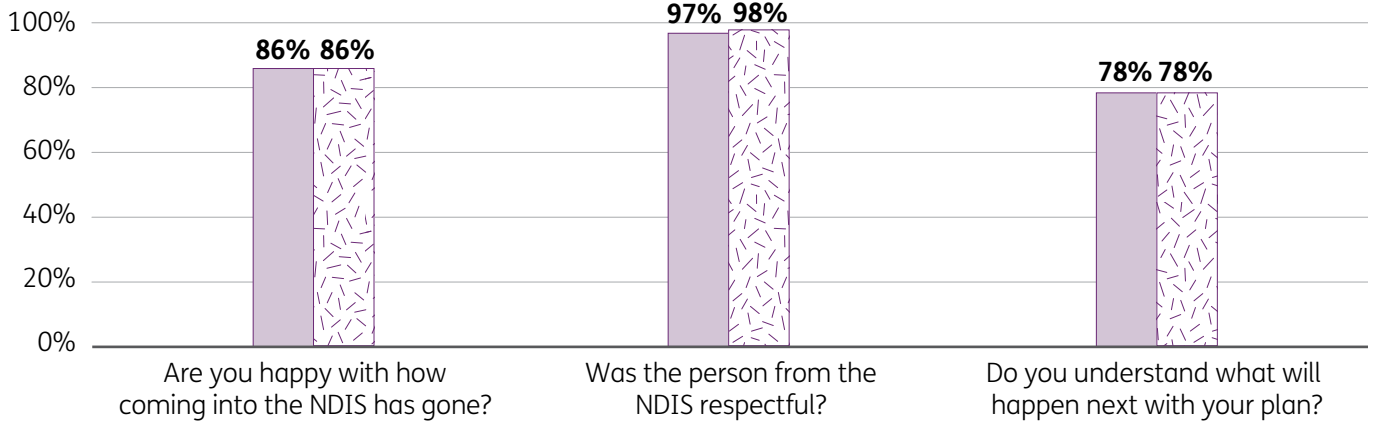
Figure 24: Rating of experience with the NDIS (1 July 2023 to 30 September 2023)

	Access	Pre-Planning	Planning	Plan Reassessment
Very good/good	77%	80%	86%	67%
Neutral	14%	12%	9%	14%
Poor/very poor	9%	8%	5%	19%

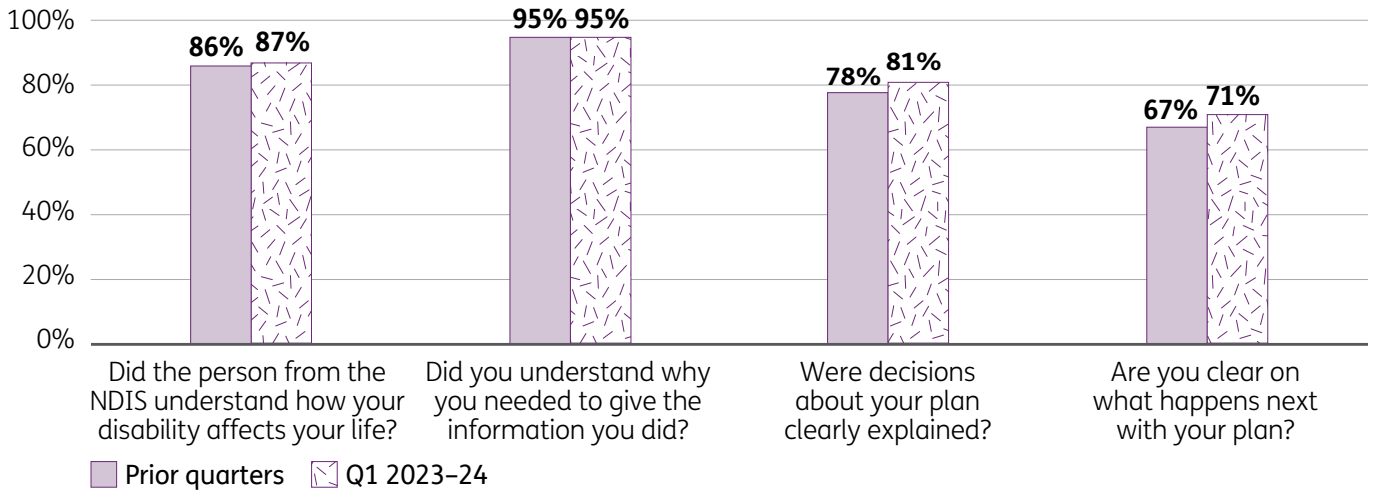
60 These results are based on 1,199 surveys at Access, 930 at Pre-Planning, 5,531 at Planning and 9,444 at Reassessment, which is 17,104 in total.

Figure 25: Satisfaction across the four stages of the pathway<sup>61</sup>

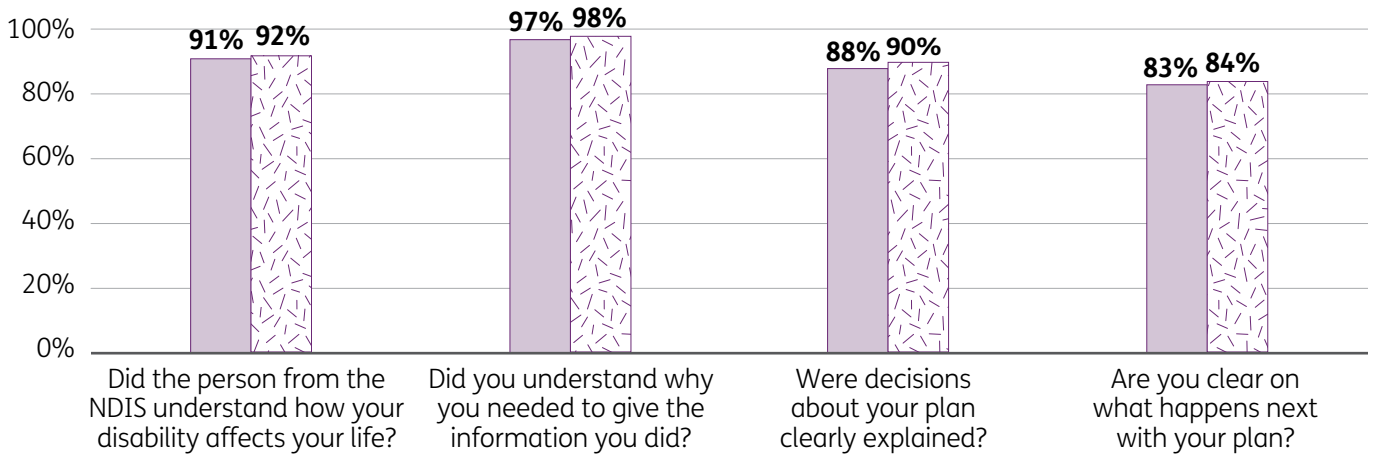
**Stage One: Access**



**Stage Two: Pre-Planning**



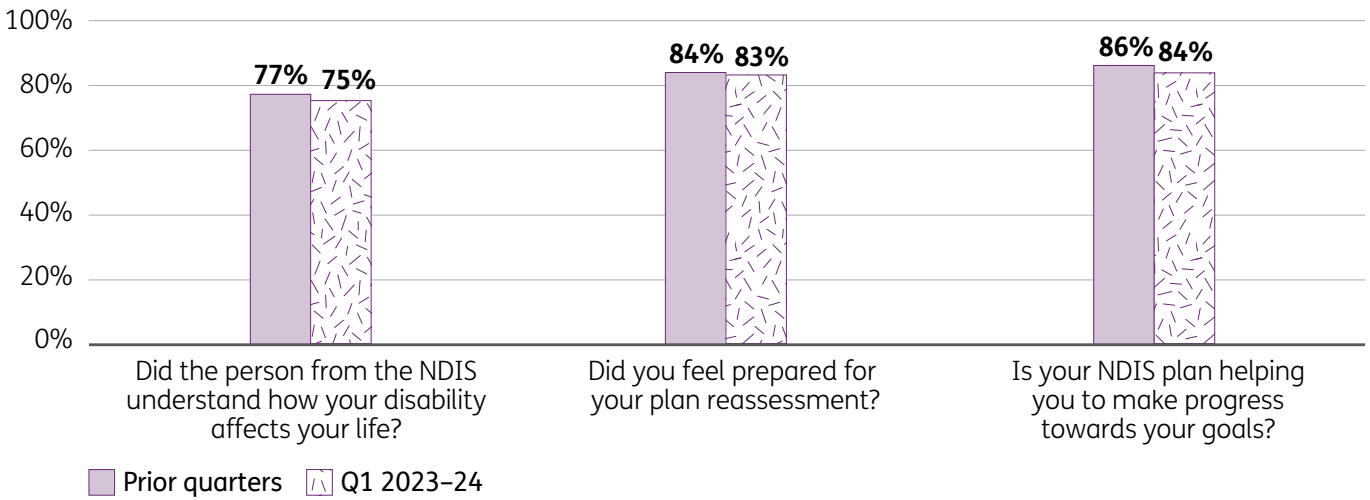
**Stage Three: Planning**



61 Prior quarters include responses from 1 October 2020.

Figure 25: Satisfaction across the four stages of the pathway<sup>62</sup> cont.

Stage Four: Plan Reassessment



The surveys also include questions that provide further insights at each stage of the pathway. The results (Figure 25) indicate that satisfaction for the September 2023 quarter is slightly more favourable than for prior quarters for most questions about the first three pathway stages, although satisfaction declined slightly in relation to Plan Reassessment.

For this quarter and historically, the percentage who have a clear understanding of what happens next with their plan in the first three steps of the participant pathway has been lower than the positive response rate for other questions. For example, at planning, 84 per cent were clear on what happens next with their plan (only 1 percentage point higher than for previous quarters), lower than the 90–98 per cent responding positively to other questions about planning.

Participants surveyed responded very positively to questions on whether the NDIS person was respectful, and understanding why they needed to provide the information they did.

62 Prior quarters include responses from 1 October 2020.

### 3.6 The NDIS National Contact Centre (NCC)

In the September 2023 quarter, the transformation of the NCC continued with the ongoing recruitment of staff for the insourced contact centre, implementation of a new contact centre technology platform, process changes to improve first contact resolution, further rollout of specialised queues and implementation of a revised training program. These deliverables saw an improvement to grade of service, and a high level of customer satisfaction and first contact resolution in the September 2023 quarter.

The NCC provides personal and high-quality services and information about the NDIS for people with disability, their family and carers, and service providers.

This quarter, the NCC continued with the implementation of the transformation strategy. During the quarter, the NCC continued to recruit for the insourced contact centre operations team. By the end of the quarter, 145 Australian Public Service (APS) NCC Operations roles were filled across three sites in Dandenong (Victoria), Robina (Queensland) and Midland (Western Australia). This was an increase of 59 APS roles from the previous quarter.

An important strategy of the insourced contact centre is a focus on disability recruitment. At the end of this quarter, 39 per cent of the insourced NCC operations team identify as having a disability. The partial insourcing of the contact centre enabled the movement of complex enquiries to APS staff who can provide advice on technical questions, reducing referrals, and improving first contact resolution.

Commencing this quarter, new NCC staff are now supported by a redesigned and expanded training program to improve skills and knowledge. Induction training has increased from 10 days to 20, and up to 15 additional days of specialisation training for each employee in their first 6 months of employment.

During the quarter, the NCC commenced the transition of key service processes to contact centre staff, enabling the NCC to resolve more transactions at the first point of contact. An example is when participants make contact requesting a copy of their plan the NCC can now provide it whilst interacting with the participant, removing the need to refer the request to other business areas to action later.

Last quarter, the NDIA implemented a dedicated phone line for Government appointed and funded advocates, guardians, and trustees. This quarter, this service was expanded nationally and has been well received. This dedicated phone line has improved the experience for these organisations by connecting them with Customer Service Officers who have additional training in the application of guardian orders and AAT processes.

The NCC also migrated to a new contact centre technology platform during the quarter as part of the NCC transformation. This new platform is managed by the NDIA and provides improved capabilities to drive first contact resolution and enhance the contact experience. The platform features speech analytics capability enabling the NDIA to better understand contact trends and the drivers of participant dissatisfaction from service issues. The new platform also enables future integration with NDIA's new computer system.

These improvements have delivered the following results for the quarter:

Section three: Participant experience

- Customer experience remained strong, with **91%** of post call survey respondents scoring their experience with the NCC as ‘High’ or ‘Very High’.
- Call volumes continued to increase in the September 2023 quarter, with **321,508** calls received, up 10% from the previous quarter. Call answering performance improved to **85%** of calls answered in 60 seconds. This was an increase from the previous quarters result of **64%** and is a result of improved staffing against demand.
- The average speed of answer for telephony contacts was **28** seconds, a 55 second improvement from last quarter.
- Webchat functionality continues to see significant growth with **35,531** webchats offered for the quarter, up 14% from the previous quarter. **83%** of all webchats received were answered within 20 seconds (80% target).
- Email enquiries continued to increase in the first quarter, with **274,009** emails received, up 5% from the previous quarter. For the September 2023 quarter, **60%** of email enquiries were answered within two business days (90% target). **99%** of email enquiries were responded to within 3 business days, the average wait time for email responses was **1.8** business days. No complaints on email wait times were received.

Figure 26: Quarterly telephony grade of service, average speed of answer, call volume and customer experience results

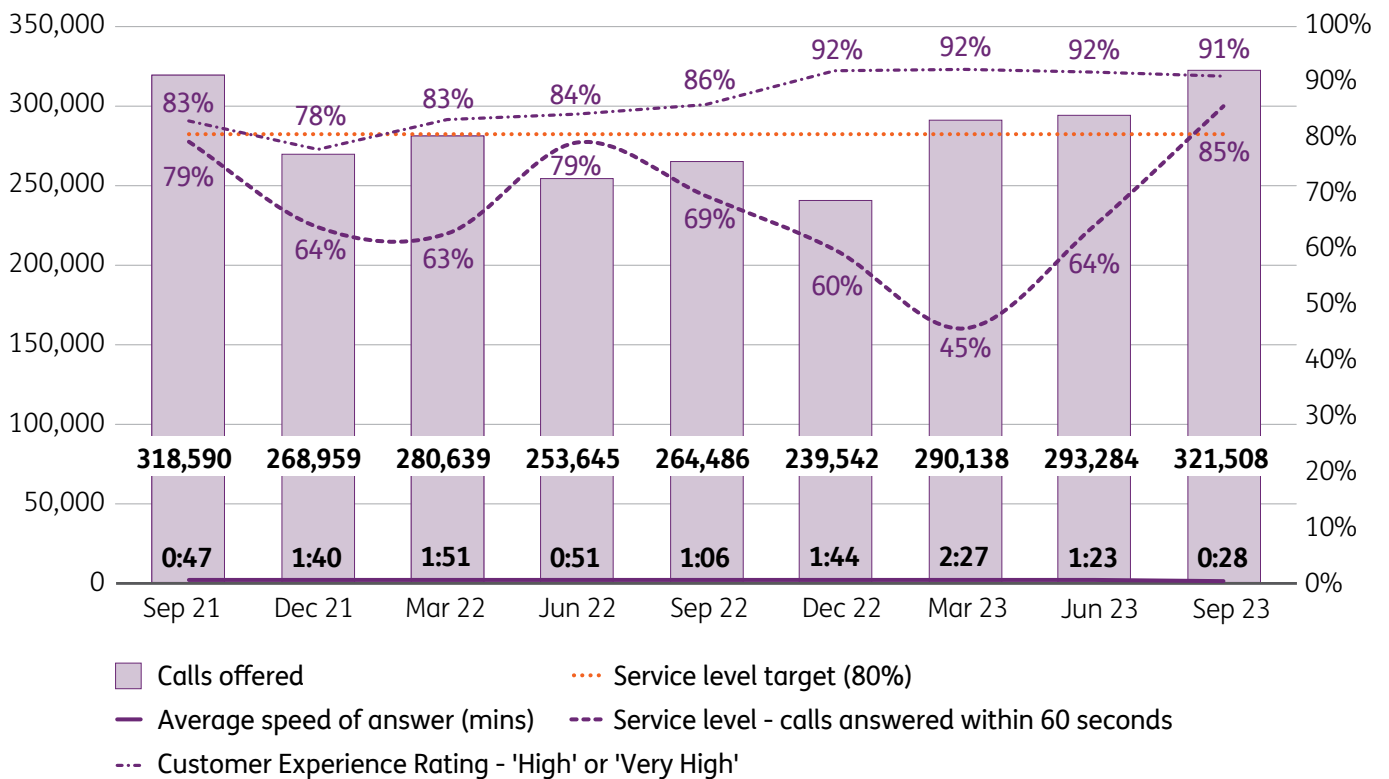


Figure 27: Quarterly webchat grade of service and offered chat volume

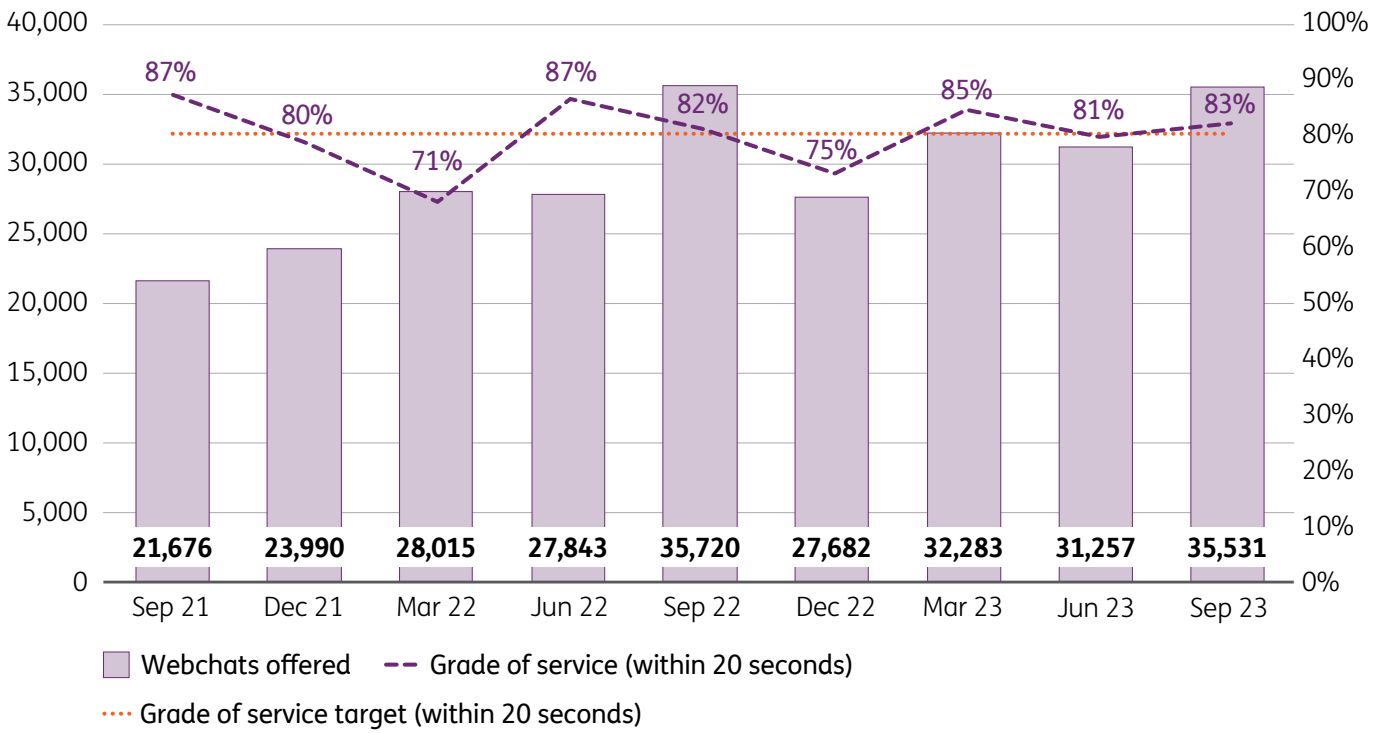
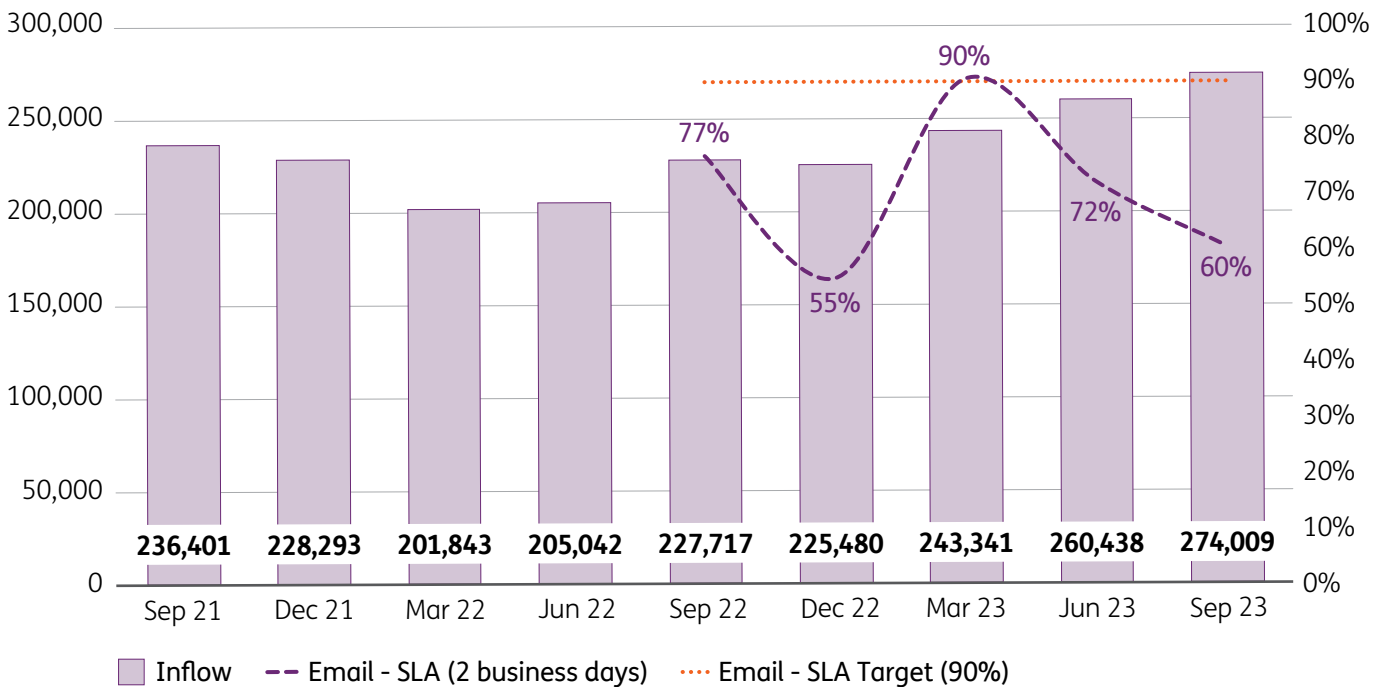


Figure 28: Quarterly email grade of service and email volume





## Support base helps mum return to the workforce

When Sue leaves for work these days she knows her daughter, Edie, is also leading her best life thanks to her support workers.

An NDIS participant since 2018, Edie, 38, has a rare genetic disorder, Mowat-Wilson syndrome.

Her NDIS plan includes access to support workers 3 days a week, speech and exercise physiology sessions, as well as physical activities and massage appointments. The support worker visits have allowed Sue to return to the workforce after a career in medical administration.

‘With Edie’s support workers there, I go to work on Tuesdays and Thursdays and just love it,’ Sue said. ‘While I’m working, Edie can go out with her support worker and participate in the community, so it’s a win-win.’

Despite being non-verbal, Edie and Sue share an unbreakable bond that transcends mere words. ‘There are other ways we communicate besides words,’ Sue said. ‘Even though Edie is completely non-verbal, she will make happy sounds, like a chuckle. She will clap when she likes something. She always knows what’s going on.’

As a child, Edie missed several development milestones and began therapy that continued throughout her childhood. She suffered seizures until her teenage years, and at the age of 21, she was diagnosed with Mowat-Wilson syndrome.

Sue uses her administrative skills to self-manage Edie’s NDIS plan.

‘The key is self-management,’ Sue said. ‘Before, I’d go through a plan manager to find out what we could do and how much it would cost. There would always be delays and frustrations. I thought, “I’ve done admin all my life, it can’t be that hard”.’

‘The best thing about Edie’s NDIS plan is freedom and flexibility, which allows her to lead her best life. At any time, I can see how much funding Edie’s got. We’re given a budget and we make that work. Self-management gives ownership back to the carer and person with a disability.’

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‘For people who don’t understand, just walk one day in my life and see the difference the NDIS has made,’ Sue said.

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## Section 4: Providers and the growing market



The provider market continues to grow.

### 4.1 Support categories

The largest support categories are core support for daily activities, core support for social and community participation, and capacity building for daily activities.

\$36.6bn in support has been provided in the 12 months to 30 September 2023.<sup>63</sup> The largest support categories are core daily activities (52 per cent of total payments), core social and community participation (22 per cent of total payments), and capacity building daily activities (13 per cent of total payments). Core daily activities includes participants in SIL. \$9.4bn of the \$19.1bn payments on core daily activities in the 12 months to 30 September 2023 was for payments for participants in SIL.

Figure 29: Total payments from 1 October 2022 to 30 September 2023

Support category	Total payments (in \$m)	% of total payments
Core – daily activities	19,064	52.1%
Core – community	8,103	22.2%
Core – consumables & transport	1,436	3.9%
Capacity building – daily activities <sup>64</sup>	4,611	12.6%
Capacity building – other	2,320	6.3%
Capital	1,023	2.8%
<b>Total<sup>65</sup></b>	<b>36,566</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Over the last two years, payments have grown by 53 per cent (from \$6.5bn in the September 2021 quarter to \$9.9bn in the September 2023 quarter). Payments have grown substantially across the support categories, most notably for core social and community participation (growing by 96 per cent over the period).

<sup>63</sup> This represents total payments on a cash basis (including payments made under in-kind arrangements). On an accrual basis, total payments were \$37.1 billion.

<sup>64</sup> Includes therapy services.

<sup>65</sup> Total includes \$8m of payments with no support category.

## 4.2 Plan management types

There has been a significant shift in plan management, with an increasing number of participants choosing to use a plan manager rather than have the Agency manage their plan.

Over the past two years, the proportion of participants who:

- **Self-manage all or part of** their plan has decreased from **31%** to **29%**
- Use a **plan manager** has increased from **51%** to **61%**
- Have an **Agency-managed** plan has decreased from **18%** to **10%**.

More participants who have entered the Scheme in recent years have chosen to use a plan manager for some or most of their supports, compared with participants who joined the Scheme earlier. This is a key driver of the increase in the number of participants with plan managers.

Out of 174,275 active providers in the September 2023 quarter, 8,877<sup>66</sup> providers provided support to Agency-managed participants and 173,546<sup>67</sup> providers provided support to plan-managed participants.<sup>68</sup>

There have also been changes in payments over the past two years across these three plan management types:

- **Self-management** has remained between **12%** and **13%**
- Payments managed by a **plan manager** have increased from **42%** to **55%**
- **Agency-managed** payments decreased from **45%** to **34%**.

In the September 2023 quarter, of the \$9.9bn in payments, \$1.2bn was self-managed (12 per cent), \$5.4bn was managed by a plan manager (55 per cent), and \$3.3bn was Agency-managed (34 per cent)<sup>69</sup>.

The proportion of plan management types differs by support category, in the first quarter of 2023–24:

- Payments for **participants in SIL receiving core daily activities support** were **\$2.5bn**. Of this, \$1m was self-managed (**less than 1%**), \$529m was managed by a plan manager (**21%**), and \$2.0bn was Agency-managed (**79%**).
- Payments for **participants not in SIL receiving core daily activities support** were **\$2.6bn**. Of this, \$364m was self-managed (**14%**), \$1.8bn was managed by a plan manager (**71%**), and \$375m was Agency-managed (**15%**).
- Payments for **participants receiving core social participation support** were **\$2.3bn**. Of this, \$196m was self-managed (**9%**), \$1.7bn was managed by a plan manager (**75%**), and \$385m was Agency-managed (**17%**).
- Payments for **participants receiving capacity building daily activities support (therapy supports)** were **\$1.3bn**. Of this, \$371m was self-managed (**29%**), \$828m was managed by a plan manager (**64%**), and \$100m was Agency-managed (**8%**).

<sup>66</sup> The number does not include plan managers who received only payment for plan management fees.

<sup>67</sup> The number includes plan managers who are providing Agency-managed supports.

<sup>68</sup> A plan manager may give support to both Agency-managed and plan-managed participants. There is an overlap of 8,148 providers between these categories and the number of active providers by plan management type add up to more than 100 per cent.

<sup>69</sup> Includes cash and in-kind payments.

## 4.3 Plan managers

The number of plan managers in the Scheme continues to grow as more participants choose to utilise them.

### Provider types

Participants supported by plan managers can use registered or unregistered providers. Unregistered providers are used for “general” support items which are not necessarily disability specific and can be considered more readily available. For the 12 months to 30 September 2023, an unregistered provider was used less frequently and has a higher proportion of one-off payments (i.e. the unregistered provider is only used once). On average the frequency of one-off payments was approximately 3 times lower for registered providers.

### Payment characteristics

In the September 2023 quarter, 173,546 providers supported plan-managed participants out of which 12,484 were registered at some point during the quarter.<sup>70</sup>

Payments to plan managers were \$5.4bn in the September 2023 quarter. Of this \$5.4bn, \$135m was for the plan management services, and the remainder of \$5.3bn was for plan managers to pay service providers on behalf of participants.

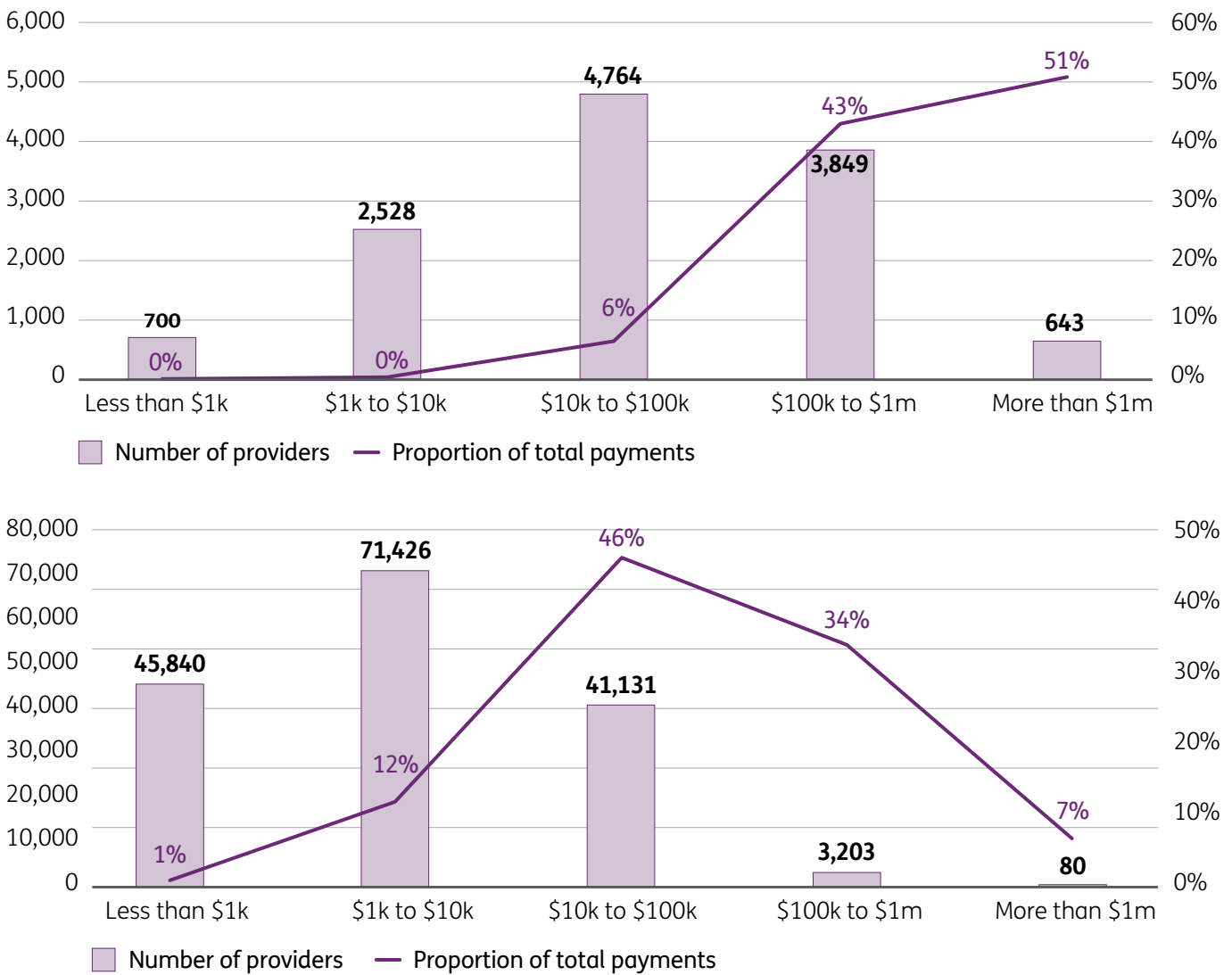
Participants supported by plan managers can use registered or unregistered providers. Across all plan managers, 56 per cent of the \$5.3bn total plan managed payments in the September 2023 quarter (not including plan management fees) were paid to registered providers, 44 per cent of plan-managed payments were paid to unregistered providers and one per cent of plan-managed payments were paid to providers with unknown registration.

Although only 44 per cent of plan-managed payments went to unregistered providers, the market of unregistered providers is large, which means there are many providers receiving smaller total payments. Although only 7 per cent of providers paid through plan managers are NDIS registered providers, they represent 56 per cent of total payments in the quarter. Further, 36 per cent of NDIS registered providers received over \$100k in NDIS funding for the quarter, compared to only 2 per cent of unregistered providers receiving over \$100k in funding.

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<sup>70</sup> Registration status of a provider may move between registered and unregistered over the quarter.

Figure 30: Number of providers servicing participants through a plan manager and proportion of total payments<sup>71</sup> in the quarter by payment band – NDIS Registered (top) vs Not Registered (bottom)<sup>72</sup>



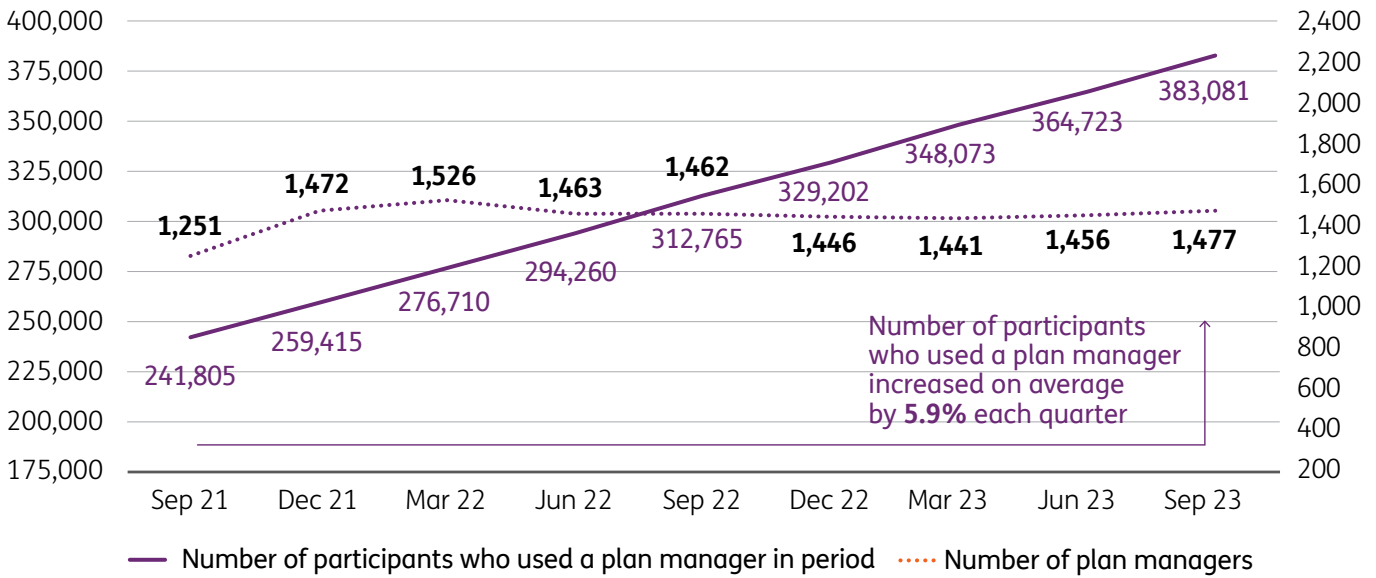
Over the past nine quarters, the number of plan managers has increased from 1,251<sup>73</sup> at September 2021 to 1,477 at September 2023. Most of the increase occurred in the year to September 2022; the number of plan managers is close to stable thereafter. Over the same period, the number of participants being supported by plan managers increased from 241,805 to 383,081 – a quarterly average increase of 5.9 per cent. This indicates that while new plan managers are entering the market, the increase in plan managers is not as large as the increase in participants and that many plan managers are expanding as the ratio of participants to providers has increased.

71 \$45m of payments made to providers with “unknown” registration status have not been included in this chart.

72 Registration status is determined as at posting date of payment. Some providers may be counted more than once if they changed registration status during the quarter.

73 The historical number of plan managers takes into account any revisions in their registration status.

Figure 31: Participants and providers with a plan manager by quarter – all participants<sup>74</sup>



## 4.4 Supported Independent Living (SIL)

\$3.3 billion of SIL supports was provided in the September 2023 quarter.

Total payments to participants in SIL have increased by 20 per cent annually over the last three years, from \$7.1bn to \$12.3bn. The number of participants has also increased from 23,558 on 30 September 2020 to 32,973 on 30 September 2023. A more consistent and comprehensive participant centric decision making process has moderated the growth in the number of SIL participants over the past quarter.

The average payment per participant for SIL supports has also increased and comprises a large component of the total average payment for participants in SIL (noting that participants in SIL also receive other supports, such as core support for community participation, employment, and capacity building). The average payment per participant for SIL supports (core daily activities) has increased by 6 per cent annually over the last 3 years.

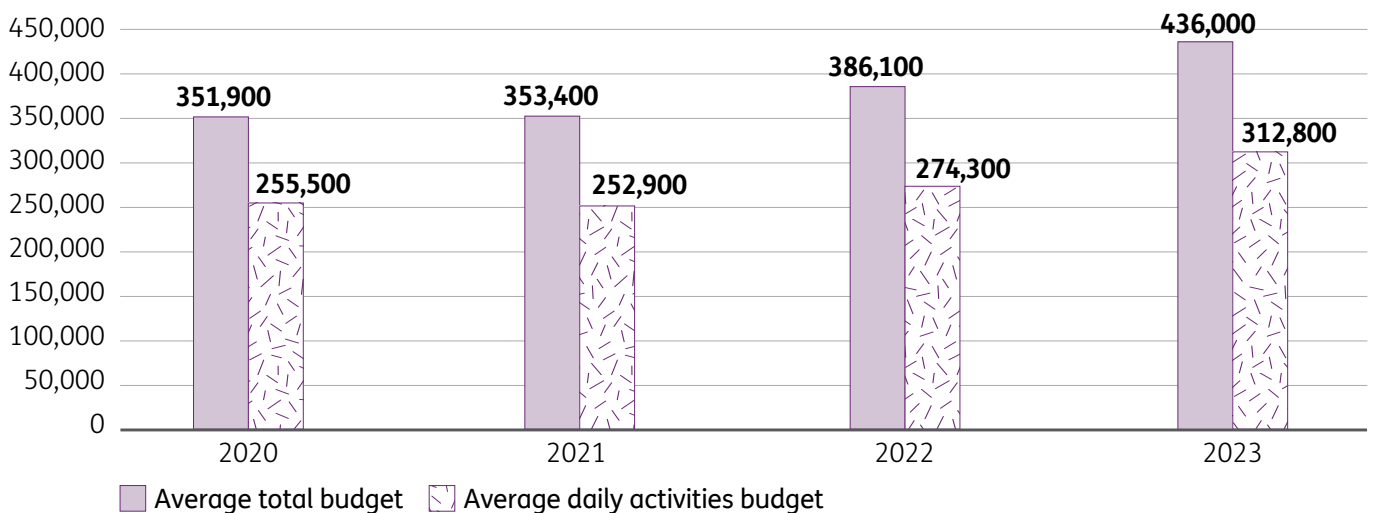
74 The historical number of plan managers takes into account any revisions in their registration status.

Figure 32: Number of participants and payments for years ending 30 September – participants in SIL<sup>75</sup>

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	% increase (per annum)
Active participants	21,654	23,558	25,028	28,018	32,973	12%
Total payments (\$m)		7,138	8,042	9,222	12,254	20%
Average payment (\$)		312,000	332,500	352,100	397,900	8%
Total payments – core daily activities (\$m)		5,790	6,427	7,215	9,389	17%
Average payment – core daily activities (\$)		260,200	254,900	281,600	309,000	6%

In addition to payments, average plan budgets for participants in SIL have also increased over time, including the component of the plan budget for SIL supports (core support for daily activities). Specifically, there was a 7 per cent per annum (or 24 per cent overall) increase in average plan budgets, and a 7 per cent per annum (or 22 per cent overall) increase in the average daily activities component of plan budgets over the three years to 30 September 2023.

Figure 33: Average plan budgets over time for years ending 30 September – participants in SIL (\$)



<sup>75</sup> Due to operational changes since July 2020, there has been an issue with identifying SIL in plans as they are being completed. A temporary and manual solution was implemented to estimate the number of active participants who should be identified as having SIL in their plans but do not appear as such on the Agency's system. From May 2022, an automated and more accurate method has been applied in identifying participants in SIL leading to a restatement in the number of participants in SIL from July 2020 to April 2022. Given the basis for identifying participants in SIL has changed since July 2020, the comparison between 2020 and 2019 is not entirely on a like for like basis. For 30 September 2023, refinements have been made to the logic for identifying participants receiving SIL to reduce known issues with under-identification following plan reassessment. The improved logic at 30 September increases the number of SIL participants identified, estimated as 802 at 30 September 2023.

## 4.5 Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA)

### The total number of enrolled SDA dwellings continues to increase.

The number of active participants with SDA supports has increased by 15 per cent annually over the last three years, reaching 23,277 as of 30 September 2023. The average plan budgets for SDA supports have also increased by around 12 per cent per annum, leading to an increase in total SDA supports in participant plans by around 29 per cent per annum, from \$185 million as at 30 September 2020 to \$395 million as at 30 September 2023.

Total SDA payments have increased by 29 per cent annually over the last three years, from \$113 million to \$242 million.<sup>76</sup> The average SDA payments per participant have also increased, by 8 per cent per annum.

Figure 34: Number of participants, plan budgets and payments for years ending 30 September – participants with SDA supports<sup>77</sup>

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	% increase (per annum)
Active participants with SDA funding	15,240	16,347	20,920	23,277	15%
Total SDA supports (\$m)	185	214	306	395	29%
Average SDA supports (\$)	12,139	13,071	14,613	16,970	12%
Total SDA payments (\$m)	113	146	205	242	29%
Average SDA payments (\$)	8,590	9,233	11,001	10,943	8%

The total number of enrolled SDA dwellings at 30 September 2023 was 8,299<sup>78</sup>, up by 23 per cent annually over the last three years, and by 965 dwellings (13 per cent), compared to a year ago at 30 September 2022. This increase was observed across most design categories. The largest relative increase was for dwellings of the Robust category (42 per cent, 224 dwellings) and the High Physical Support design category (38 per cent, 808 dwellings). All states and territories saw increases in enrolled dwellings.

As of 30 September 2023, there were 4,846 participants in an SDA dwelling seeking an alternative dwelling and 1,254 more participants not in an SDA dwelling seeking a vacancy. Of the combined 6,100 participants seeking SDA dwellings, 1,991 (33 per cent) were for the Improved Liveability design category and 1,643 (27 per cent) were for High Physical Support.

<sup>76</sup> To deal with an accumulated backlog of payments, the NDIA has made off-system payments to providers directly. The \$205m total SDA payments made in the year ending on 30 September 2022 includes off-system payments of \$10.5 million made in June 2022.

<sup>77</sup> A proportion of participants with SDA funding may never use their SDA funding or only utilise it at a future date and work is underway to better understand this split.

<sup>78</sup> This includes dwellings funded via "cash" arrangements only. An additional 1 dwelling is funded under in-kind arrangements, bringing the total number of SDA dwellings to 8,300 at 30 September 2023.

### 4.6 Choice and control, utilisation and market concentration

Comprehensive data on market effectiveness is being used to improve participant outcomes across all regions through identifying thin markets.

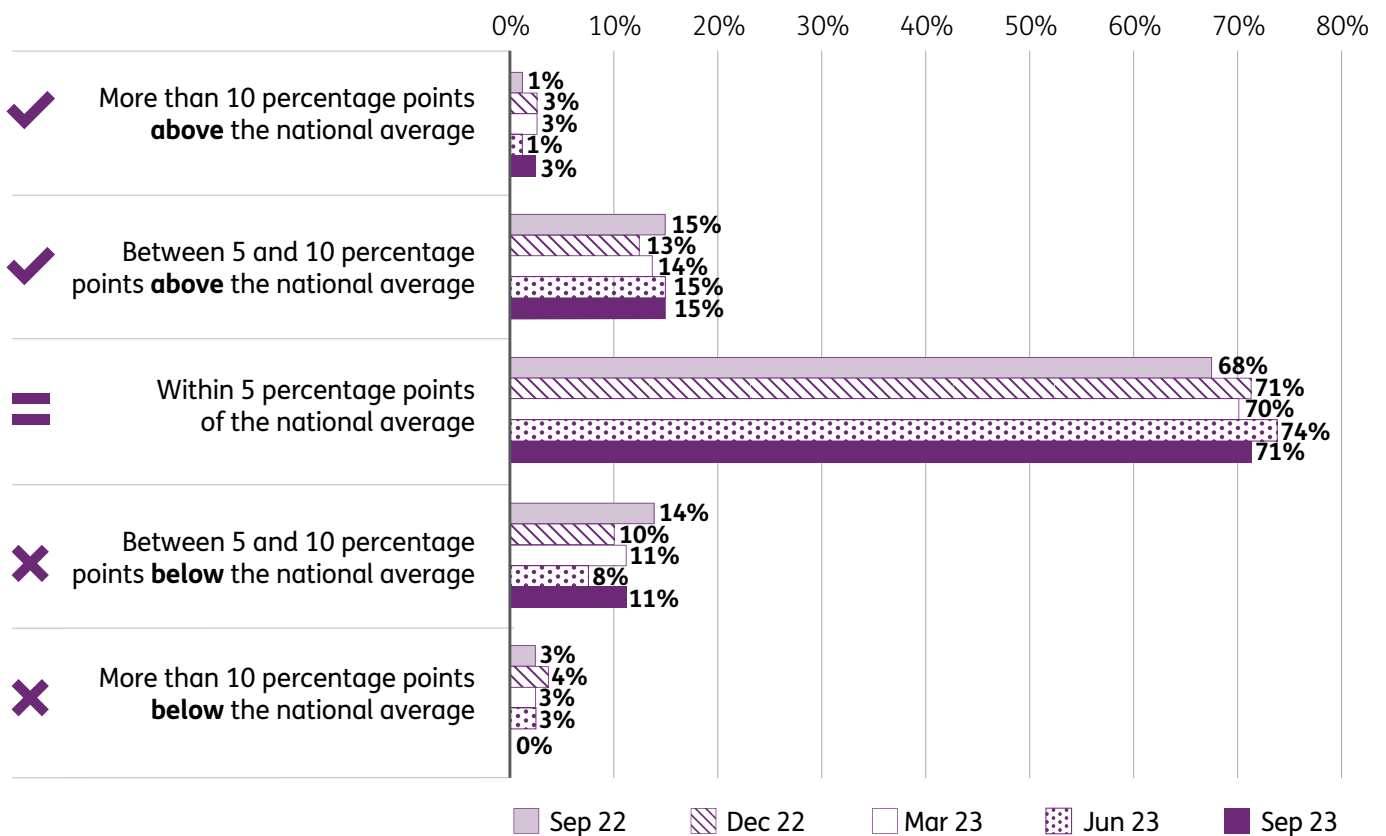
Between September 2022 and September 2023, the choice and control and market concentration performance metrics have improved whilst the utilisation metric has shown slight deterioration.

#### Choice and control

Overall, 57 of the 80 service districts (71 per cent) in the analysis were within five percentage points of the national average, two service districts (three per cent) were more than ten percentage points above the national average, and no service district was more than ten percentage points below the national average.

Over the last year the percentage of service districts more than ten percentage points below the national average has decreased three per cent to zero. The percentage of service districts within five per cent of the national average has increased from 68 per cent to 71 per cent.

Figure 35: Choice and control – distribution of service districts – gap to benchmark – trend<sup>79</sup>



79 There has been retrospective movement in the gap to benchmark figures for the June 2023 quarter, compared to what was shown in the previous report, due to a correction.



**Utilisation**

Overall, 60 of the 80 service districts (75 per cent) in the analysis are within five percentage points of the national average<sup>80</sup>, no service district was more than ten percentage points above the national average, and nine service districts (11 per cent) were more than ten percentage points below the national average.

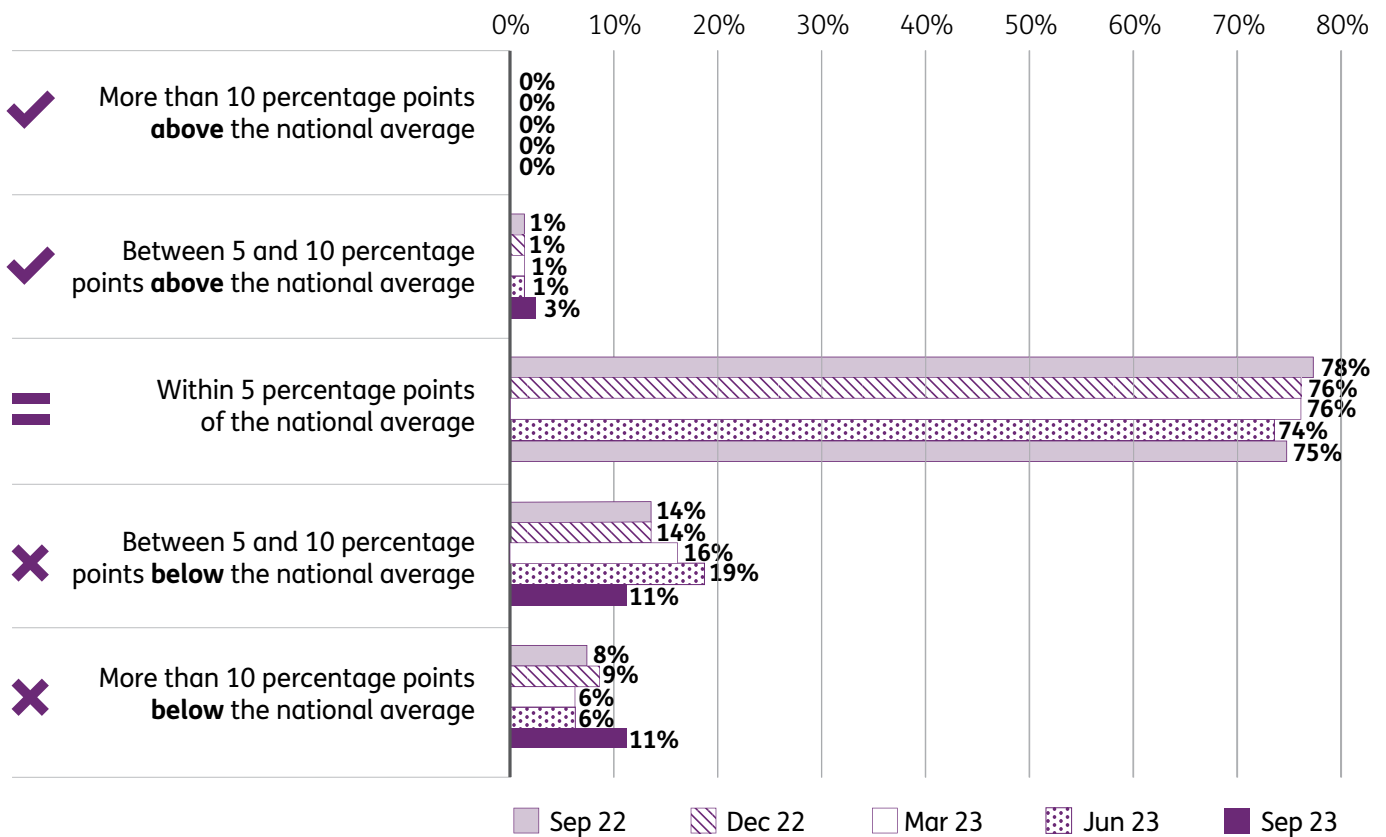
The number of service districts more than ten percentage points below the national average has increased from five to nine since last quarter.

There are nine service districts between five and ten percentage points below the national average.

Over the last year, the number of service districts more than ten percentage points below the national average has increased from six (eight per cent) to nine (11 per cent). The number of service districts within five percentage points of the national average has decreased from 62 (78 per cent) to 60 (75 per cent).

The number of service districts between five and ten percentage points below the national average has decreased from 11 (14 per cent) to nine (11 per cent) over the last year.

Figure 36: Utilisation – distribution of service districts – gap to benchmark – trend



80 Utilisation has been adjusted to account for the differences in the proportion of participants in each service district receiving SIL, along with the time participants have been in the Scheme.

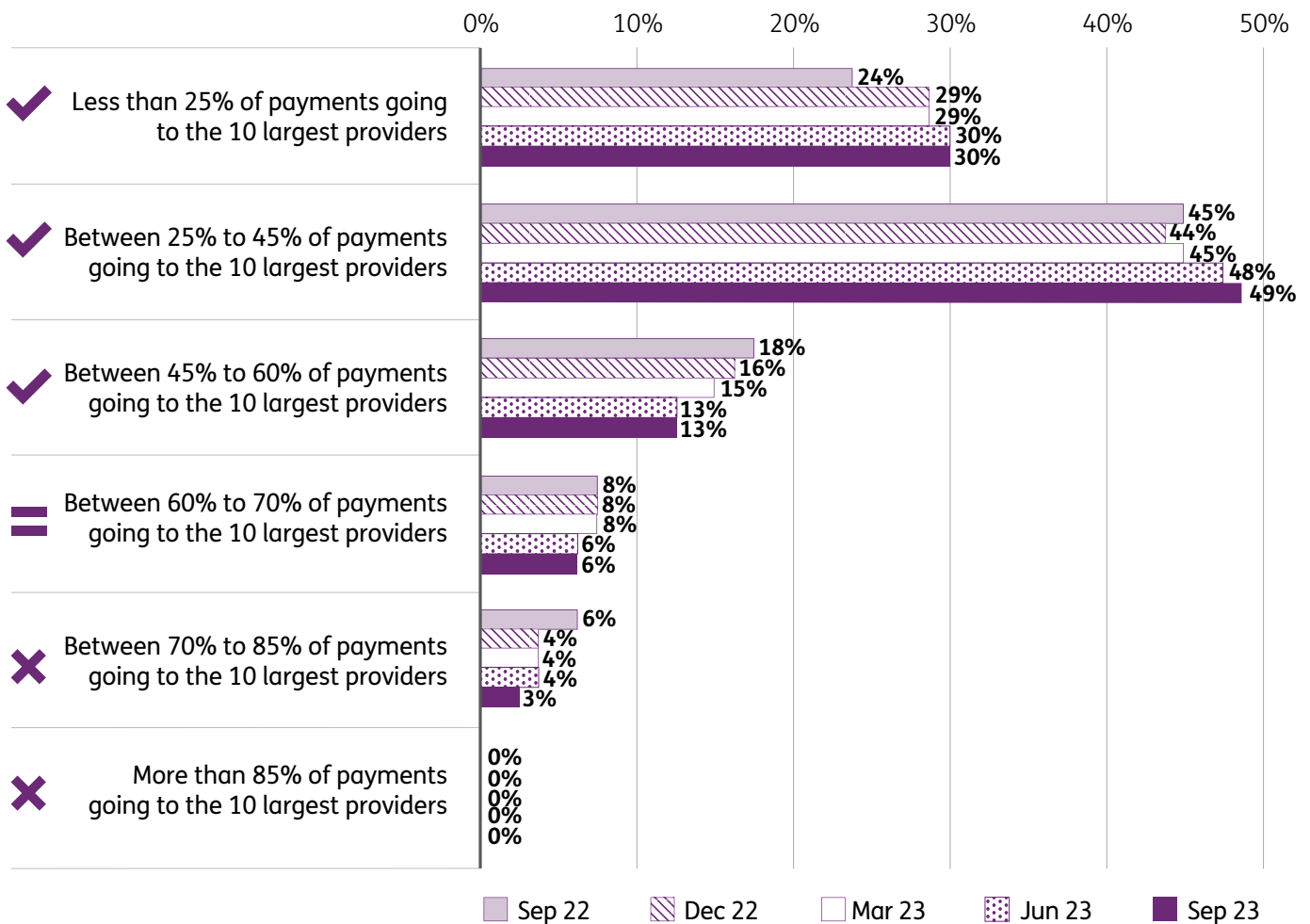
**Market concentration**

As of 30 September 2023, for the six month period to 30 June 2023, six per cent of NDIS payments across Australia were paid to the largest ten service providers, excluding providers paid through self-managed payments.

The analysis below considers payments to providers in the six-month period to 30 June 2023. There are two service districts where 70 per cent or more of payments go to the largest ten providers within the service district (three per cent) and 63 service districts where less than 45 per cent of payments went to the ten largest providers within the service district (79 per cent).

Over the past year, the number of service districts where 60 per cent or more of payments go to the largest ten service providers has decreased, and simultaneously the number of service districts where less than 45 per cent of payments went to the ten largest providers has increased. The number of service districts where between 60 to 85 per cent of payments go to the ten largest providers has decreased from 11 (14 per cent) to seven (nine per cent). Further, as of September 2023, there was no service district where the ten largest providers received more than 85 per cent of payments.

Figure 37: Market concentration – distribution of service districts by percentage of payments going to the 10 largest providers – trend



## 4.7 COVID-19 Assistance

### The NDIA continues to give COVID-19 support.

COVID-19 continues to present concern for people with disability and for some participants there is a greater risk of serious illness from COVID-19. Vaccination remains the strongest form of protection against COVID-19 infection and illness. The NDIA remains focused on removing barriers to participants accessing the necessary supports and services required to mitigate their COVID-19 risk through flexible plan utilisation and COVID-19 targeted measures.

In July 2023, the NDIA's Participant Reference Group (PRG) met to better understand barriers people with disability experienced during the pandemic, and to identify ways to improve access to vaccinations and COVID-19 disability supports and services. PRG noted the need for clearer and more accessible information about COVID-19 for participants and those who care for them. In response to this feedback, the NDIA has commenced actions to increase awareness and improve clarity and accessibility of COVID-19 information, supports and services. PRG also noted the importance of participants' providers and carers as a trusted source of information. The NDIA has subsequently increased engagement with providers, encouraging ongoing discussions and action to support participants to get vaccinated and maintain access to critical services. The NDIA continues to work with government, states, and territories agencies to improve outcomes for people with disability and to keep NDIS participants safe from COVID-19.

## 4.8 Market Stewardship activities

### The NDIA continues to support the developing NDIS market including developing home and living options and partnering with the sector to improve quality and outcomes of support coordination.<sup>81</sup>

#### SDA Pricing Review

The implementation of the 19 recommendations resulting from the Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) Pricing Review 2022–23 is being progressed with SDA funding updates to eligible participants' plans expected to commence during October 2023. An implementation plan for the recommendations that require policy and legislative consideration, and broader stakeholder engagement, is being finalised and will be informed by the findings of the NDIS Review.

In June 2023, as part of the SDA Pricing Review, the NDIA released the SDA Demand Projections Report. In response to the report the NDIA has developed a 20-year projection model to estimate the expected number of SDA participants at an SA4 Region and Design Category level. This projection is based on the observed propensities for NDIS participants to need SDA, and the Scheme Actuary's projections of the future participant numbers and mix.

The NDIA projects that SDA demand will increase from about 20,000 participants in June 2022 to about 36,700 in June 2042, at an average growth rate of 2.4 per cent per annum. This compares to annual growth in the Australian population of 1.2 percent per annum; growth in the number of NDIS participants of 5.7 per cent per annum and growth in the number of NDIS participants with SIL supports of 5.6 percent per annum.

81 <https://data.ndis.gov.au/reports-and-analyses/market-monitoring#specialist-disability-accommodation-sda-quarterly-report>

### Home and Living demonstration projects

The NDIA has announced the results of the *Empowering Participants: Information, Assistance and Connections* grant round. An investment of \$1.018 million over two years will establish the second round of home and living demonstration projects.

The following four organisations have been awarded the grants: Summer Foundation – \$174,000 over 1 year; Self-Advocacy Sydney Incorporated – \$280,000 over 2 years; VALID Inc – \$358,000 over 2 years; and University of Melbourne – \$206,000 over 2 years.

The projects will test different ways of delivering high quality information, assistance and connections support to NDIS participants looking to explore their Home and Living options. The projects will commence in Q2 and run for up to two years with over 900 participants expected to be involved across Australia.

## 4.9 NDIS pricing

**The NDIA has continued to implement the Annual Pricing Review (APR) recommendations.**

The NDIA implemented the updated NDIS Pricing Arrangements and Price Limits 2023–24 on 1 July 2023 after the conclusion of the last APR. More information about NDIS pricing arrangements can be found on the [NDIS website](#)<sup>82</sup>.

Following the release of the last APR recommendations, the Economics and Pricing Branch held four seminars with the sector, reaching approximately 150 attendees each to explain the rationale of the APR decisions to the public.

Planning for the 2023–24 APR is currently underway.

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82 <https://www.ndis.gov.au/providers/pricing-arrangements#ndis-pricing-arrangements-and-price-limits>



## Jeff leaves aged care and hospital to start a new life

The future looks bright for Jeff. He feels he has found a new family – a house manager, support workers and house mates who all have his best interests at heart.

Jeff, 50, has Multiple Sclerosis (MS) and also has seizures resulting in partial memory loss.

Jeff lived in Woolloomooloo with his elderly mum, who cared for him until she passed away. Never married, an only child and with no children, Jeff lived alone until he had a fall. Not able to walk or manage on his own, he ended up in residential aged care.

‘I was 45 when I went into a nursing home. It was different but I was cared for’, he said.

In aged care, Jeff was able to access physiotherapy which helped him to walk again, but he mainly relied on a motorised scooter. Then another fall saw Jeff hospitalised again.

In Sydney’s St Vincent’s Hospital, Jeff’s Disability Network Manager Natalie visited him regularly.

‘Natalie talked to me about my situation. How I was living in aged care and after my fall how my needs had changed,’ Jeff said. ‘She said the NDIS may be able to support me to move out of aged care. She suggested I lodge an NDIS plan reassessment, so I did.’

Knowing Jeff was an NDIS participant, Natalie contacted Helen, an NDIA Health Liaison Officer about Jeff’s admission.

‘In Jeff’s case, he was living in aged care. He was too young. It was clear he needed a housing assessment with increased care needs,’ Helen said.

‘It was a real collaborative effort,’ she said. ‘We were all so pleased to see Jeff leave hospital and aged care and head to his new home. It means he can start living his life again,’ she said.

Jeff said it ‘was so good to be out of hospital’ and living in such a lovely home. ‘People have been so nice. I can’t believe I’m doing it,’ he said.

‘I’m walking now. I wasn’t when I came here,’ he said. ‘I’ve got so much better. The physio brings a walker with arm rests. It also has a belt, so it helps me to take small steps. I can go from the loungeroom up the hallway now. I’m proud of myself. It’s amazing,’ he said.

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**‘I’m really happy living here. Everyone is so supportive. It’s like I have a new family.’**

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## Section 5: Financial sustainability



A financially sustainable Scheme achieves outcomes for participants across their lifetimes and is affordable now and into the future.

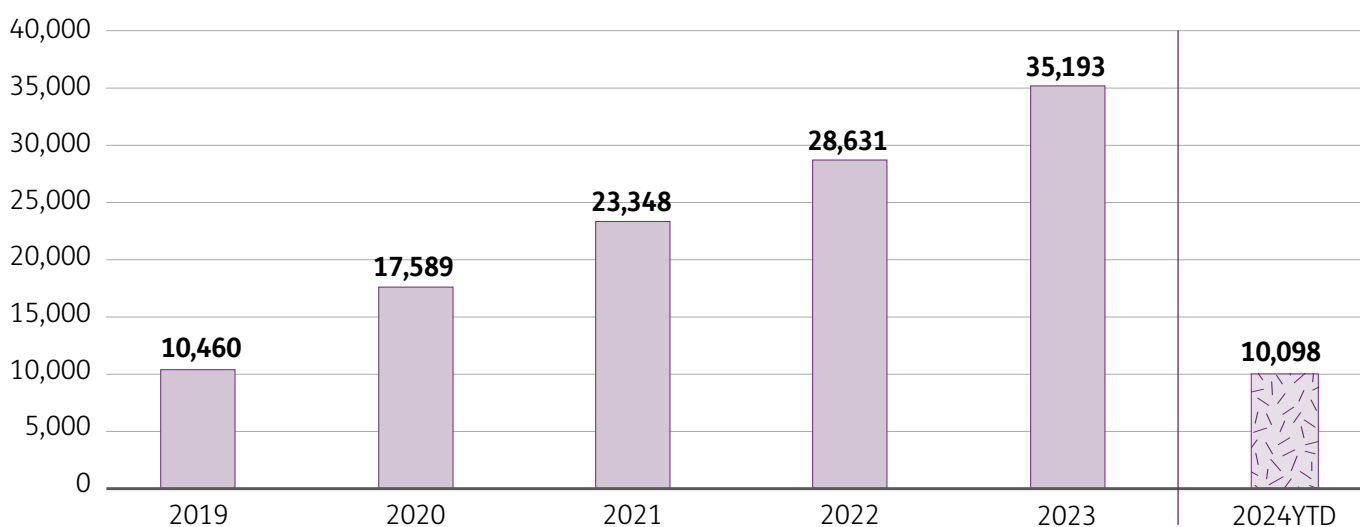
### 5.1 Total payments

Total Scheme payments continue to increase due to both increased participant numbers and higher average cost per participant.

Total payments have increased over the last four years, from \$10.5 billion in the year to 30 June 2019 to \$35.2 billion in the year to 30 June 2023. The payments in the 3 months to 30 September 2023 were \$10.1 billion.<sup>83</sup>

The increasing number of participants benefitting from the Scheme contributes to the increase in payments.

Figure 38: Total payments (\$m) for financial years ending 30 June<sup>84</sup>



<sup>83</sup> This compares to \$8.2 billion in the 3 months to 30 September 2022.

<sup>84</sup> Total scheme costs are presented by financial year on an accrual basis, sourced from the NDIA Financial Accounts. The Scheme costs figure is made of total Scheme expenses, less Scheme grant payments, write-downs and write-offs.

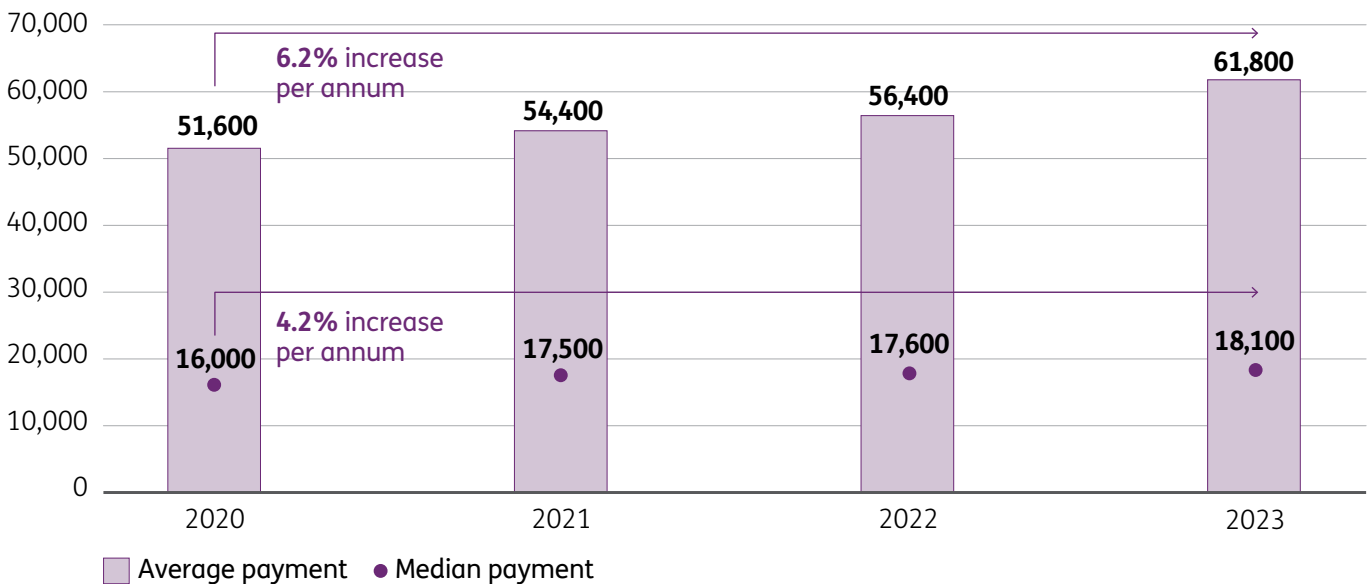
## 5.2 Average and median payment trends

Average and median payments per participant have increased by 6.2 per cent and 4.2 per cent per annum respectively over the last three years.

Both the average (mean) payment per participant and the median payment per participant provide useful information. In the NDIS, the average payment is much higher than the median payment because there is a skewed distribution with a small number of participants receiving very high cost supports, and a large number receiving low cost supports.

Trends in average and median payments per participant between 1 October 2019 and 30 September 2023 indicate that average payments have increased by 6.2 per cent per annum, and median payments have increased by 4.2 per cent per annum.

Figure 39: Average and median payments for years ending 30 September



Trends in average and median payments are affected by changes in the profile of participants in the Scheme over time. Specifically, average payments are much higher for participants in SIL than those not in SIL, by a factor of almost 9 times. Average payments are also higher for adults compared with children, by a factor of almost four times. Over the past four years the proportion of participants under 15 years of age has increased from 40 per cent to 43 per cent and the proportion of participants of SIL in the Scheme has decreased from 6.2 per cent to 5.1 per cent. The impact of this changing mix is to reduce the average and median payment, all else being equal.

### 5.3 Average plan budget trends

Average plan budgets have also increased over time for the same cohort of participants.

In addition to average payments increasing over time, average plan budgets have also increased over time, for both participants in SIL and not in SIL.

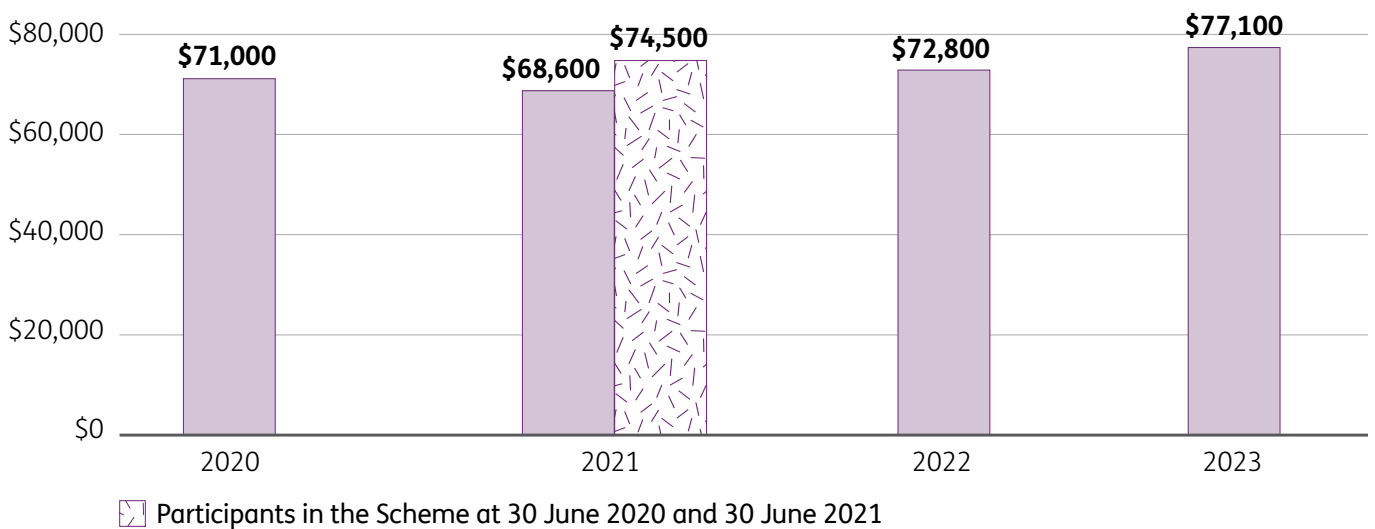
Specifically, over the three-year period to 30 September 2023:

- Average plan budgets have increased by **2.8%** per annum for all participants
- Average plan budgets have increased by **7.4%** per annum for participants in SIL
- Average plan budgets have increased by **1.9%** per annum for participants not in SIL.

The slight decrease in average annualised plan budgets in the year ending 30 September 2021 is due to the new participants entering the Scheme in the year to 30 September 2021 having, on average, lower plan budgets. This was driven by high proportions of participants entering the Scheme, under the age of 18 (as children have lower plan budget on average than adults).

Importantly, there was no reduction in the average plan budgets of participants continuing in the Scheme. For example, for these existing participants who were in the Scheme at 30 September 2020 and at 30 September 2021, the average plan budget **increased** from \$71,000 to \$74,500 (4.9 per cent).

Figure 40: Average annualised plan budgets for years ending 30 September



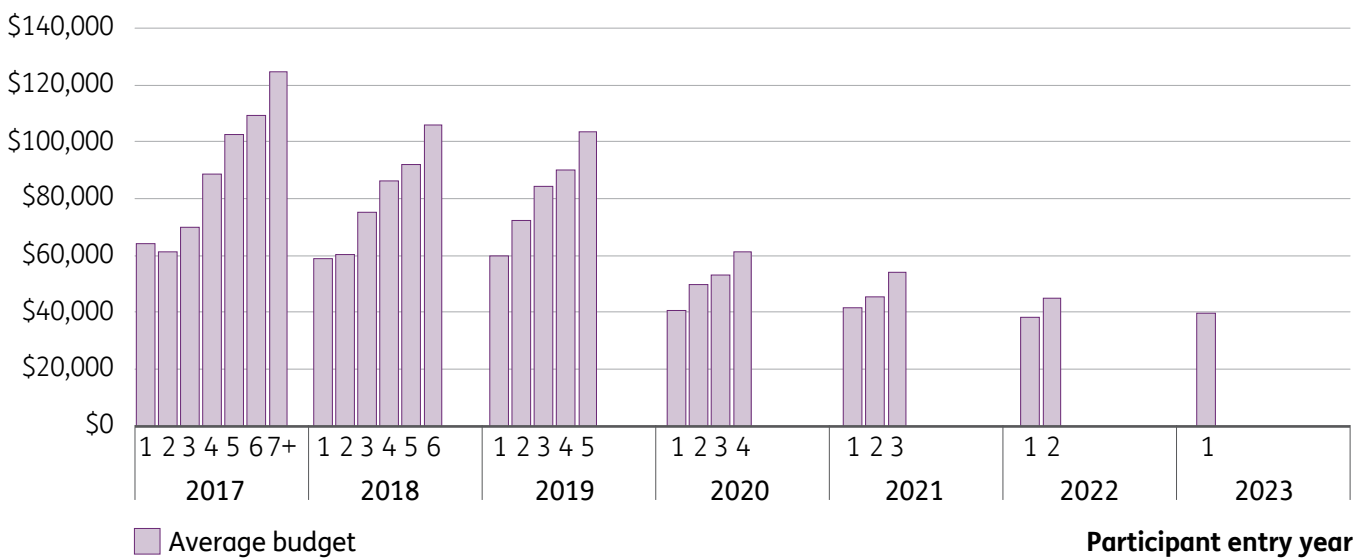


As the mix of participants has changed over time, understanding trends in average plan budgets for the same group of participants over time is important.

Figure 41 groups participants into cohorts based on the year participants entered the Scheme and shows the trend in average plan budgets based on the number of years they have been in the Scheme. For example, average plan budgets for participants who have entered the Scheme in the year ending 30 June 2018, increased from \$59,000 for their first year to \$106,100 for participants who have been in the Scheme for 6 years.

Average budgets have reduced for participants entering in the year ending 30 June 2020 and later relative to earlier years at the same stage of development. For example, those who entered the Scheme in 2020, had an average plan budget of \$40,800 for their first plan, compared to a first plan budget of \$64,200 for participants who entered in 2017. This reflects a changing mix of participants towards younger participants who tend to have lower budgets and payments on average and a maturing market with increasing participant knowledge improving interactions with the NDIS and enabling better use of budgets.

Figure 41: Average plan budgets by years of entry ending 30 June, and number of years in Scheme



### Plan reassessments and plan budgets variations

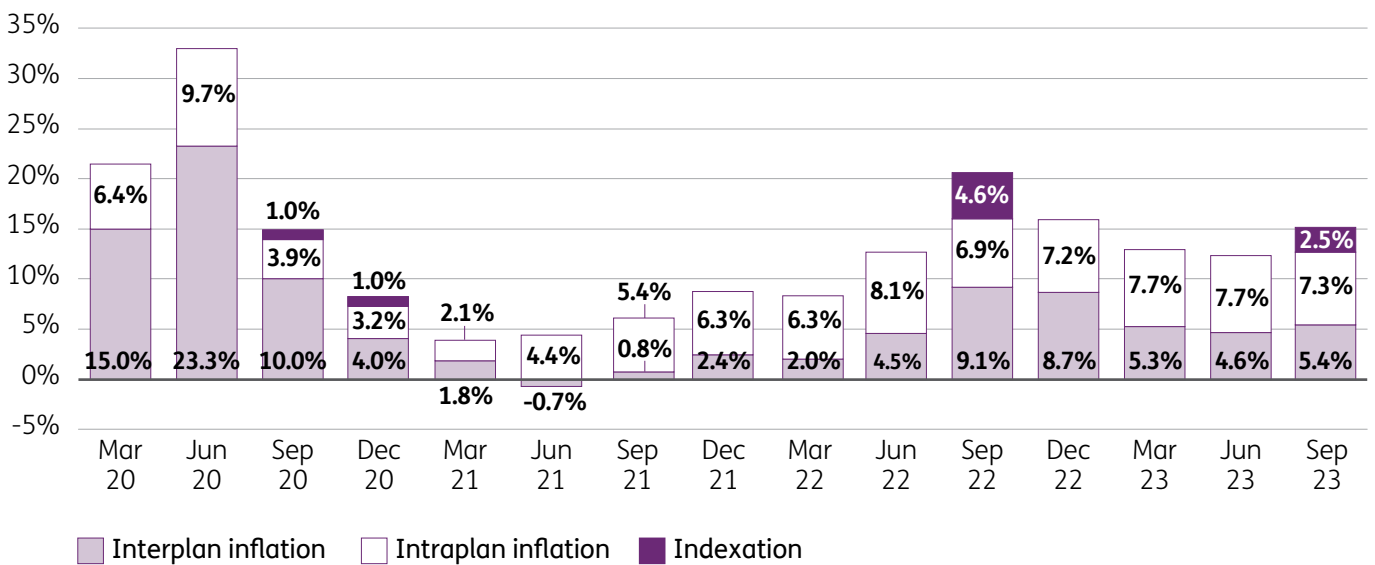
Plan reassessments result in plan budgets varying for a variety of reasons – for example, one-off capital items in one plan and not the next. Another example is investment in capacity building (such as behavioural supports) resulting in less need for core support over time. The NDIA has published an Operational Guideline on Plan Reassessments<sup>85</sup> which details the reasons a new plan could be different to a current plan.

### Plan inflation

In the September 2023 quarter, total plan inflation was 5.5 per cent (15.1<sup>86</sup> per cent per annum). Of the 15.1 per cent per annum total plan inflation in the quarter, 5.4 per cent was due to changes at plan reassessment, and 9.7 per cent was due to changes occurring within a plan between reassessments; the 9.7 per cent is inclusive of a 2.5 per cent one-off impact of the indexation of plans in July following the Annual Pricing Review<sup>87</sup>.

The plan inflation of 15.1 per cent per annum (12.7 per cent excluding indexation) in September 2023 compares with plan inflation of 12.3 per cent per annum in June 2023, and 13.0 per cent per annum in March 2023. Inflation occurring at plan reassessment was 5.4 per cent per annum which compares with 4.7 per cent per annum in June 2023, and 5.3 per cent per annum in March 2023. Inflation occurring within a plan, between reassessments (excluding indexation) was 7.3 per cent per annum which compares with inflation of 7.7 per cent per annum in June 2023 and March 2023.

Figure 42: Annualised percentage change in plan budgets for active participants<sup>88</sup>



85 <https://ourguidelines.ndis.gov.au/your-plan-menu/changing-your-plan>

86 The annualisation calculation of inflation excludes the impact of plan indexation in July following the Annual Pricing Review. The impact of this indexation is then explicitly added to the annualised calculation which is a 2.5 per cent one-off increase.

87 The Annual Pricing Review saw price limit increases from 1 July 2023. Unspent portions of plan limit increases were increased in line with new price limit to maintain the purchasing power of remaining plans. Due to this, there has been a one-off increase in intraplan and total inflation during the month of July 2023.

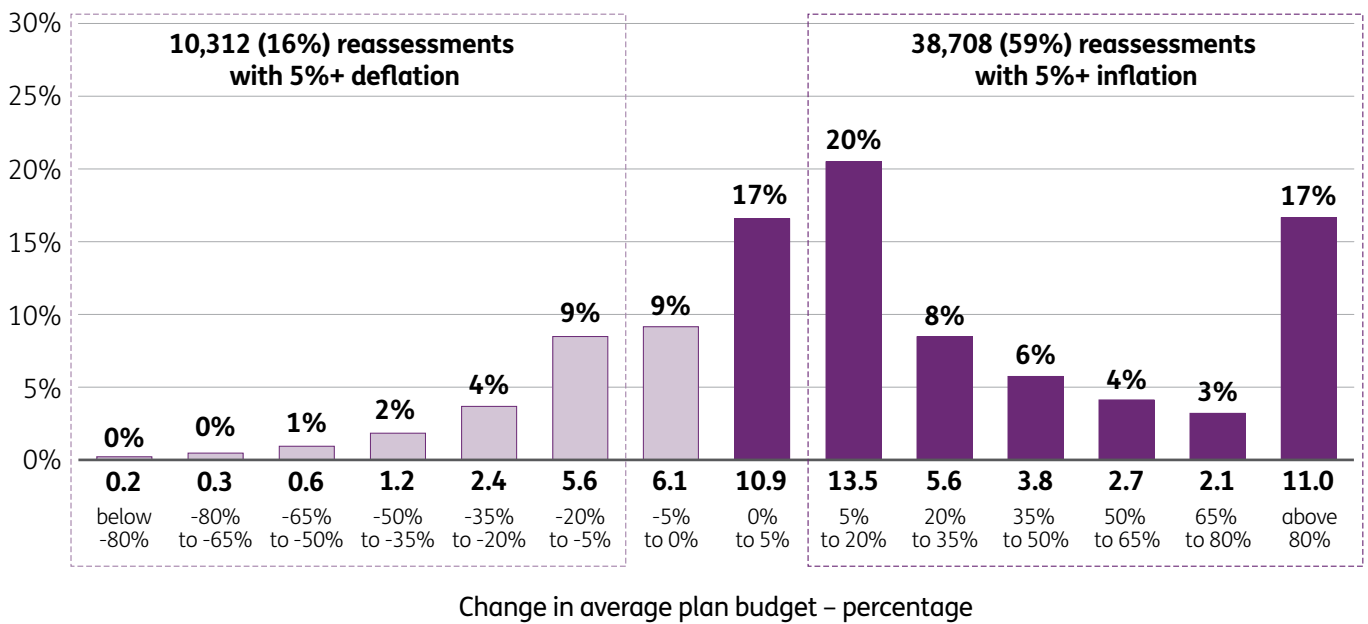
88 Improvements have been made to the committed supports model in the new Information and Communications Technology (ICT) system commenced in Tasmania in the December 2022 quarter. This has resulted in a one-off change in the historical inflation rates. In addition, indexation adjustments have been applied to the September 2020 and December 2020 quarters. This led to the one-off change in the inflation rates for these quarters.

At the individual level, plan budgets can vary significantly. When looking at experience in this financial year (from 1 July 2023 to 30 September 2023), taking account of total plan inflation, plans were more likely to increase rather than decrease.

Specifically<sup>89</sup>:

- **59%** of plans increased at reassessment by more than 5%
- **16%** decreased by more than 5%
- **26%** remained within 5%

Figure 43: Distribution of the percentage change in plan budgets for plans reassessed in this financial year (1 July 2023 to 30 September 2023)<sup>90</sup>



89 Numbers sum to more than 100 per cent due to rounding.

90 The number of plan reassessments (in thousands) in each inflation percentage band is shown at the bottom of each bar in the chart. The corresponding percentage of plan reassessments in each band is shown at the top of each bar in the chart.

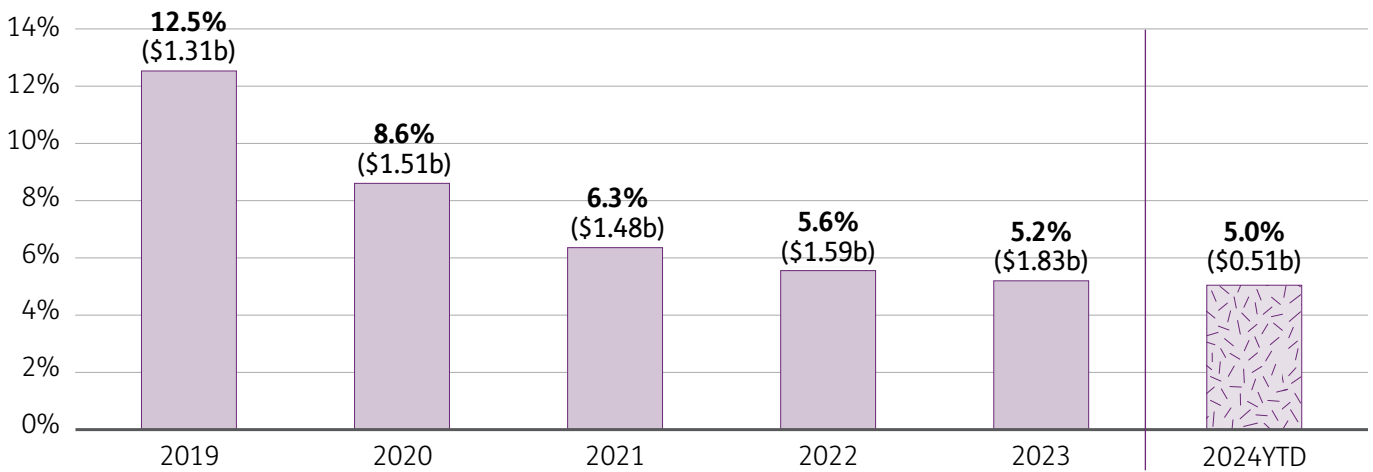
## 5.4 Operating expenses

Operating expenses per participant have reduced over the last four years.

In addition to the money spent through participant plans on supports for participants, the NDIA receives funding for its operating expenses, including paying staff wages. NDIA operating expenses have increased from \$1,310 million in 2018–19 to \$1,830 million in 2022–23.

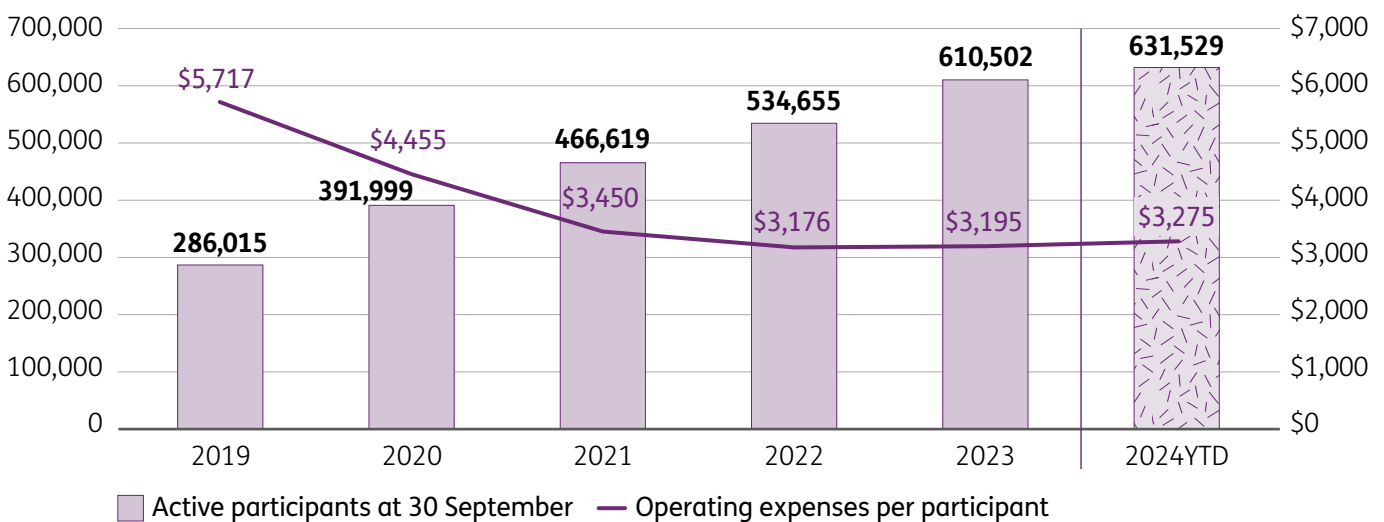
As a percentage of participant expenditure, operating expenses have decreased from 12.5 per cent in 2018–19 to 5.2 per cent in 2022–23. For the three months to 30 September 2023 the expense percentage decreased slightly to 5.0 per cent due to seasonality in operating expenses. The Productivity Commission in their 2017 Study report<sup>91</sup> suggest a range of 7 to 10 per cent as an appropriate benchmark for NDIA operating costs.

Figure 44: Operating expenses as a percentage of participant costs for years ending 30 June



Over time, the NDIA has increased efficiency. The annualised operating cost per participant has reduced by 44 per cent since 2018–19 from \$5,717 to \$3,195 in 2022–23. There is an increase in annualised operating cost per participant to \$3,275 for the three months to 30 September 2023<sup>92</sup>.

Figure 45: Operating expense per participant for years ending 30 June<sup>93,94</sup>



91 <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/ndis-costs#report>

92 Total operating expenses are based on an accrual basis, the \$1.83 bn figure has been updated since the previous report.

93 The annualised operating cost per participant for 2024 YTD is expected to drop given the seasonality in operating expenses.

94 The average number of participants is taking a simple average of the two periods (opening and closing) on active participants. Cost per participant uses these average participant numbers as the denominator.



## Chelsea's building skills to enter her chosen career

Ulverstone NDIS participant, Chelsea, is being supported to learn skills to help her achieve her chosen career – cabinet making. In her final years of school, Chelsea, 19, who has autism, was able to use her NDIS employment assistance funding to engage disability provider Multicap Tasmania to help her transition to work.

Chelsea said she enjoys woodwork, and developed an interest in it at school. 'There's something about the smell of wood and the feel of it. I really love learning how to make different things from it,' she said.

Now with support from youth employment coach Tania, Chelsea is able to access weekly woodwork classes at a local Ulverstone Woodcraft Hub near her home.

'I've made some chairs, some little boxes to put things in and a toolbox for myself. I also made a rattle tower toy, shaped like a bird cage, for my little brother Brodie.'

At the Woodcraft Hub, Chelsea is also supported to learn to manage other vital workplace tasks.

'Once a month I'm rostered on to open up the hub,' she said. 'I go in, turn everything on, count the float and go outside to check the 2 dust collector bags from the ventilation system and replace the bags if they are full. I also greet customers, tell them about all the stock we sell and help them with any purchases.'

Tania said with all the support Chelsea has received her confidence and her work and life skills have really improved.

Chelsea said having support to go to the Woodcraft Hub and to increase her work and people skills has really 'spurred' her on to secure a cabinet making job.

'Tania and I have talked about how doing all these extra tasks is helping me to build my skills and confidence. Then I'll be able to look at doing a TAFE pre-apprenticeship course in cabinet making or even start to apply for cabinet making apprenticeships,' she said.

'Watching Chelsea network with others has just been fabulous. Preparing her to succeed is key and I know she'll continue to work hard to achieve her goal,' Tania said.

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**'Seeing Chelsea continue to develop and the huge smile on her face each week is priceless.'**

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## Section 6: Staff, advisory groups and the NDIS community



Participant and sector engagement activities continue to be a focus.

### 6.1 Workforce diversity, inclusion and engagement

The NDIA continues to work on enhancing the inclusion, diversity and engagement of its workforce.

As of 30 September 2023, the total NDIS workforce was 14,161 including 6,227 APS employees, 2,084 labour hire workers and contractors, and 5,850 people employed by the NDIS PiTC and Contact Centre partners.

As of 30 September 2023, 9.8 per cent (608) of APS employees identify as a Person with Disability in the Agency's HR Information System. This represents 10.1 per cent of the APS1-6 levels, 8.3 per cent of the Executive Levels, and 9.2 per cent of the SES workforce.

Each year, the NDIA participates in the APS Census. The survey captures attitude and opinion data on important issues such as wellbeing, innovation, leadership, learning and development, and engagement of the APS workforce. This year 5,763 people (81 per cent) working at the NDIA completed the survey. The 2023 Census results showed improvements to NDIA staff wellbeing, engagement, communication and SES leadership in comparison to 2022. These results highlight a positive and productive work environment and the emotional connection and commitment employees have to the NDIA.

The NDIA continues to progress actions in the Disability Inclusion Plan (DIP) with a key highlight being the outcomes of the Employees with Disability Workplace Experience Deep Dive. The Deep Dive findings will inform prioritisation of actions under the DIP, other employee experience improvement projects, and were shared with the NDIA Board and the NDIS Independent Advisory Council (IAC).

The NDIA First Nations Employment and Inclusion Plan 2022–25 contains 22 actions. During this quarter the Agency continued to acknowledge, promote and guide its staff on First Nations cultural events and significant celebrations, including a national digital event for NAIDOC Week. The Agency continues to deliver an 'Acknowledge This Workshop', and in this quarter, 141 staff completed this workshop, and 1,167 have completed since implementation in 2020.

The Agency has participated in taking candidates of Indigenous Entry Level Program participants since 2015. In this quarter, the 2023 cohort commenced with 15 First Nations staff, the largest cohort ever supported by the Agency. This assists in increasing the number of First Nations staff working at the Agency and progressing towards the target of five per cent of its workforce identifying as First Nations.

The Agency CALD Staff Network held elections to establish a committee to provide leadership, structure and advice to advance matters relating to staff who identify as being from a CALD background. The committee will meet regularly and seek to work cooperatively with other staff network committees to foster an inclusive working environment for all staff.

Work has commenced for the NDIA to be assessed and attain bronze level accreditation in the Australian Workplace Equality Index (AWEI). This is an organisational benchmarking tool that assists workplaces assess their inclusive practices and policies with regards to LGBTIQ+ inclusion. This benchmarking tool is administered by Pride in Diversity, an LGBTIQ+ peak advocacy body.

## 6.2 Co-design and engagement

Co-design projects which are strengthening the NDIA's engagement process.

### **Refining and embedding our approach to co-design**

The NDIA understands the best way to improve the NDIS is to listen to people with lived experience of disability and first-hand experience of the NDIS. This quarter, we continued to work with the disability community to build co-design and engagement capability.

### **Co-design Advisory Group**

The Co-design Advisory Group (CAG) met twice during the last quarter (8 August and 12 September). CAG has continued to provide valuable input into the NDIA's co-design process. This quarter the CAG focused on the development of an evaluation approach for the Agency's co-design work, to support our ongoing improvement when working in partnership with the disability community. CAG has decided to meet less frequently next quarter to enable a greater focus on the Reform for Outcomes co-design.

### **Disability Representative and Carer Organisations (DRCO) Forum**

The DRCO Forum met on 18 August 2023, to provide advice on the development of the 10 year NDIA strategy and consideration of the future DRCO Forum operating model.

DRCO members met out of session this quarter to discuss funding arrangements for their participation in Reform for Outcomes co-design and met once with IAC to discuss co-designing the Reform for Outcomes initiatives.

The NDIA also provided DRCO members with an out of session demonstration of the new computer system in preparation for the national rollout of the computer system..

### **Information Gathering for Access and Planning (IGAP)**

The IGAP project was established in 2021 following the direction from Disability Ministers to "co-design a new person-centred model that delivers consistency and equity in access and planning outcomes, consistent with legislative requirements for assessments as set out under the NDIS Act". In May 2023 the IGAP Steering Committee agreed to pause the IGAP project until the recommendations of the NDIS Review have been delivered, and the NDIA has provided the findings from the IGAP engagement and research activities undertaken in 2022 to the NDIS Review to inform their considerations.

## **Home and Living**

The NDIA co-designed a Home and Living Framework with the disability community to support participants to have more choice and control over where they live, who they live with and how they are supported in their home. The NDIA has deferred release of the Home and Living Framework until after the final reports of the DRC and the NDIS Independent Review, because the reports will consider key features of the kind of home and living supports available and how they are provided to participants of the NDIS. After these final reports are released, and when the Government has considered its response, the NDIA will reconvene the co-design working group for the Home and Living Framework to consider how these reports impact the work to date, and what changes or further work are required.

Ahead of the release of these reports, the Agency is progressing work on how we can improve the experience and outcomes for participants who receive SIL through the co-design program of work to design and implement measures from the 2023–24 Australian Government Budget. This considers what changes we can make now, ahead of the reports of the Review and the Royal Commission, to improve participant outcomes and experience. The Home and Living Framework is also actively informing this work.

## **Participant Safeguarding**

The Minister released the co-designed NDIA Participant Safeguarding Policy and Implementation Plan on 10 April 2023. The Policy outlines the NDIA's commitment to support people with disability who engage with the NDIS to create or expand safeguards to improve their safety and minimise the risk of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. The actions in the Implementation Plan will be rolled out over 5 years and will be responsive to the recommendations in the DRC's final report and the NDIS Review.

## **Supported Decision Making**

The Minister released the co-designed Supported Decision Making policy and implementation plan on 4 May 2023. Supported decision making is the process of providing support to people to make decisions to remain in control of their lives. The Policy and Implementation Plan will guide how to better support participants to make decisions in the NDIS, and build the knowledge and skills of people with disability (and people who support them) to make decisions, where they need that support. The actions in the Implementation Plan will be rolled out over a number of years and will be responsive to the recommendations in the DRC's final report and the NDIS Review.

## **CALD Strategy**

The NDIA is co-designing a new CALD Strategy for 2024–2028 (the CALD Strategy) and corresponding Action Plan. The CALD Strategy and Action Plan will enable the NDIA to work to ensure that people with disability from CALD backgrounds, families and carers, can access and use the NDIS. An External Advisory Group (EAG) has provided support, advice, and guidance in developing the CALD Strategy and Action Plan. The EAG comprises representatives who work with and represent people with disabilities from CALD backgrounds.



Since July 2023, the NDIA has:

- Finalised the draft of the CALD Strategy and Action Plan. The EAG and NDIA Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) have endorsed these documents.
- Continued work on a detailed plan to support the implementation of the CALD Strategy over the coming years. The plan will outline the specific activities and resources required to deliver, report on, and monitor each of the actions in the CALD Strategy and Action Plan.
- Translated the CALD Strategy and Action Plan into Easy Read and across 17 languages (including Auslan). The CALD Strategy and Action Plan is expected to be publicly available in early 2024.

### **First Nations Strategy**

The NDIA is progressing the development of a new First Nations Strategy, to replace the 2017 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy. The NDIA has publicly committed to working with First Nations people with disability, participants, the broader First Nations disability community, families, carers, and sector stakeholders to co-design a new First Nations Strategy.

Since July 2023, the NDIA has:

- Held an in-person meeting with First Nations Advisory Council (FNAC) on 25–26 July in Sydney and an out-of-session meeting on 22 September to brief FNAC members on the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and Australia's Disability Strategy.
- Progressed working with the FNAC to finalise its Terms of Reference and to develop a workplan for the FNAC.
- Received feedback on the First Nations Strategy stakeholder engagement plan from the FNAC, IAC Equity and Inclusion Reference Group, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group, and internal stakeholders.

### **Reform for outcomes**

Six Co-design Working Groups and an Implementation Steering Committee have been established to deliver the reform for outcomes program of co-design work.

Along with the NDIA, Co-design Working Group members include representatives from the IAC, DRCOs, NDIS participants and other experts.

An Implementation Steering Committee oversees the working groups, identifying risks, issues, and crossover within the program initiatives.

### **Workforce capability**

The Australian Government has invested \$429.25 million in the NDIA to improve the consistency of access and planning decisions, to ensure all participants have an equal and fair chance to pursue their goals and achieve better outcomes.

This initiative will focus on recruiting more NDIA planners and providing training, tools and system improvements so NDIA staff and PiTC have the right skills and experience to better support participants.

The initiative is looking at ways we can:

- Have more NDIA planners so each planner can spend more time talking to participants and their families.
- Give participants more support to understand and implement their plan with PiTC.
- Provide more time for planners to work directly with participants and their families on developing plans.
- Build staff knowledge about different disability types and support needs through new resources and training.
- Develop better operational processes and guidelines about the types of supports the NDIS will fund to support participants achieve better outcomes.

### **Better planning**

The Australian Government has invested \$73.4 million in the NDIA to deliver better participant experiences through plan implementation and monitoring support to participants.

This initiative will focus on hiring new staff, producing information, and actively supporting participants use their plans.

The initiative is looking at ways we can:

- Make sure participants understand their plan budget and have access to tools and resources to be more independent.
- Make sure participants are using their funding on the right supports and services. This will mean participants get the right supports and services to help them pursue their goals, become more independent, and do not run out of money before their plan ends.
- Help participants manage their budget to improve their experience with the NDIS and support them to achieve better outcomes.

### **Flexibility**

The Australian Government has invested \$63.8 million in the NDIA to implement a new lifetime planning approach.

This initiative will focus on finding ways to make plans more flexible so they can meet the changing needs of participants and families over their lifetime.

The initiative is looking at ways we can:

- Make sure participants receive the funding for supports and services they need when they need them.
- Have a clear definition of 'early intervention' and improve transition planning.
- Support people with disability to access information and use mainstream and community supports whether they are a NDIS participant or not.
- Develop early intervention pathways, with a focus on early childhood, for children under 9.
- Have accountability for providers delivering capacity building supports to show the outcomes that result from the services they provide.

### **Independent living**

The Australian Government has invested \$56.4 million in the NDIA to improve the way we deliver SIL. This initiative will focus on how we can improve decision making about SIL funding.

The initiative is looking at ways we can:

- Support participants to transition to the most suitable and beneficial home and living option when they need it – finding the right supports to live as independently as possible.
- Improve the information and guidance for participants about the home and living process, requirements, and evidence needed to support a decision.
- Make sure planners have the skills and tools to empower participants to explore community and mainstream living options.
- Improve decision making so the NDIA can deliver more consistent and quality decisions on reasonable and necessary supports for participants.

### **Evidence-based supports**

The Australian Government has invested \$29.3 million in the NDIA to improve participant access to evidence-based supports that meet their individual needs. This initiative will focus on how the NDIA can make it easier for participants to get the right support, at the right time, for the right price.

The initiative is looking at ways we can:

- Help participants make informed decisions when choosing providers.
- Provide participants with more information and options when choosing providers, including better information on the NDIS website and in other community forums.
- Improve access to information about what supports and services help participants pursue their goals and achieve better outcomes, based on evidence and best practice.
- Develop a better method for capturing and reporting on outcomes.
- Develop ways that participants can compare prices for services across different providers.

### **Fraud and non-compliance**

The Australian Government has invested a further \$48.3 million to fight against fraud in the NDIS by funding NDIA staff and the development of a business case for information and communications technology (ICT) systems to detect, prevent and reduce non-compliant payments.

This initiative is focusing on ways to stop fraud before it occurs and protect NDIS plans from being misused.

## 6.3 Valued input from the Independent Advisory Council

The IAC continues to provide valued advice to the NDIA Board and management.

The Independent Advisory Council to the NDIS (IAC) continues to work with NDIA staff and the NDIA Board to deliver advice to improve the NDIS. This quarter, the IAC has focused on early childhood transitional handovers to Local Area Coordinators (LACs), as well as transitions from teenager to adulthood; the Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) program research to inform future investment which was undertaken by Swinburne University for the DSS and the NDIA; delays to home and living decisions; improved access to Justice Liaison Officers for people with disability in custody; and the NDIA Employee with Disability Deep Dive by the NDIA Participant Advocate Donna Purcell.

In September, IAC also held another hybrid meeting based in Melbourne to which representatives of the Victorian Disability Advocacy Council (VDAC) and the Disability Advocacy Resource Unit (DARU) were invited to provide reflections on emergency response collaborations and key issues for the advocacy sector, respectively.

Each of the IAC's four reference groups have met since the start of the new membership term on 1 July 2023. The updated reference group membership brings in many new members, including an increase in young people and members with intellectual disability. The reference groups have started developing work plans which outline their focus areas and how they will provide input and support to IAC priorities.

More information about the IAC, including meeting bulletins, is available at the [IAC website](#)<sup>95</sup>.

## 6.4 Public data sharing and the latest release of information

The NDIA continues to release timely data and analysis to stakeholders.

Data about the Scheme is shared publicly to the [data.ndis.gov.au](https://data.ndis.gov.au) website through interactive tools, download files, reports and analyses.

In this quarter the following public data downloads and reports were released throughout August and September 2023:

- On 16 August 2023, the [accompanying data supplements](#)<sup>96</sup> to the fourth quarter 2022–23 Quarterly Report to Disability Ministers were released, followed by the latest updated participant, provider and market data files in the [datasets](#)<sup>97</sup> section.
- On 27 September 2023, [explore data](#)<sup>98</sup>, an interactive visualisation tool was updated with fourth quarter data on participant, provider and market demographics.
- On 28 September 2023, the annual reports for the [Participant dashboards](#)<sup>99</sup> series were released, providing a summary report and accompanying data to 30 June 2023 for 15 disability types represented in the Scheme. This release builds on the 2022 reports, by adding profiles of two additional disabilities, Other Neurological and Other Physical to the range of data shared.

Several deep dive reports and analyses have also been released in previous quarters, these are available at [data.ndis.gov.au](https://data.ndis.gov.au).

95 <https://www.ndis-iac.com.au/news>

96 <https://data.ndis.gov.au/reports-and-analyses/quarterly-report-supplements>

97 <https://data.ndis.gov.au/data-downloads>

98 <https://data.ndis.gov.au/explore-data>

99 <https://data.ndis.gov.au/reports-and-analyses/participant-dashboards>

## 6.5 Fraud and Compliance

### The NDIA continues to identify and respond to compliance risks.

The NDIA has substantially boosted its investments in identifying and responding to fraud and compliance risks and improving the integrity of the NDIS. The October 2022–23 Budget invested \$126 million over four years to establish a Fraud Fusion Taskforce (FFT). The FFT brings together the NDIA, Services Australia, law enforcement agencies and regulators, to better enable intelligence sharing, identification and response to fraud perpetrated by serious organised crime entities and others seeking to exploit the Australian Government’s system of social supports.

A key deliverable of the FFT is the development of strategic prevention capability that will be scalable and reusable across other government programs and payments. The Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission joined the FFT this quarter, bringing the total number of agencies participating in the taskforce to 16.

The 2023–24 Budget provided for a further \$48.3 million investment in the NDIA to crack down on fraud and non-compliance in the Scheme. This measure is funding an increase in the number of NDIA staff responding to non-compliance and fraud, and the development of a business case for ICT systems to detect, prevent and reduce non-compliant payments. The business case is nearing finalisation. A set of 9 capabilities have been identified, which combined, will address current ICT and business process challenges to embedding fraud prevention.

A key element of the NDIA’s compliance approach is to collaborate with providers to raise awareness of their responsibilities and to educate them on how to be compliant when claiming. The NDIA continues to build on its targeted compliance activity by regularly monitoring and responding to incorrect or unusual claims made by providers.

Quarter 1 continued to see an increase in the number of tip-offs received by the NDIA via the Fraud Reporting and Scams Helpline. The NDIA received 5,453 tip-offs this quarter, compared to 3,187 for the same period in 2022–23.

As of 30 September 2023, there were 49 fraud matters under investigation and an additional 5 matters under preliminary evaluation for investigation. Of these, 17 matters are before the courts under prosecution, with a total alleged fraud value of \$16.1 million.

Key fraud investigation outcomes for Q4 FY2022/23 were:

- On 9 August 2023, a Queensland man charged with dishonestly gaining financial advantage from a Commonwealth entity was convicted on plea to 2 years and 3 months imprisonment. The Queensland man is the third of four offenders convicted and jailed for their role in defrauding the NDIS in this case.
- On 22 August 2023, two of four offenders alleged to have acted as an organised crime group perpetrating fraud against the NDIS to the value of \$4,540,651 in 2020, as well as committing fraud against other Australian Government programs, pleaded guilty to conspiracy with the intention of dishonestly obtaining a gain and dealing in the proceeds of crime offences.

- In August 2023, two South Australian men alleged to have knowingly submitted false claims to defraud the NDIS to the value of \$465,000 were arrested and charged with 21 fraud related offences. The offenders have been banned from delivering supports to NDIS participants by the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission.
- On 27 September 2023, the principal offender linked to four Western Sydney-based NDIS providers alleged to be engaged in significant fraud against the NDIS was arrested and charged.

## 6.6 NDIA's new computer system and processes

The NDIA is introducing its new computer system gradually from 30 October 2023.

We are introducing our new computer system and processes across Australia gradually from 30 October 2023, following extensive testing in Tasmania that started in November 2022.

As at 30 September 2023:

- Over **5,800** Tasmanian participants have approved plans in our new computer system.
- Over **1,000** new participants have had their access requests and plans developed in our new computer system.
- Over **374,000** payments have been made in our new computer system, equating to more than \$145 million in payments

The new computer system will enable the NDIA to deliver a better participant experience, and to operationalise the outcomes from the Government's recent Budget investment, the Independent Review of the NDIS (NDIS Review), and the Disability Royal Commission into Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.

### How we've prepared to start the national roll out

We are taking a staged approach to introducing the new system to help make the change easier. We expect the rollout to take up to 18 months.

We tested our new system in Tasmania, and the lessons from it are informing how we roll out across the country and how we make the change as easy as possible for participants and providers.

We've also invested in training for our NDIA staff and NDIS partners, making sure their training and the support available is fit for their purpose.

### Dedicated improvement website

In preparation for the national expansion of our new computer system and improved ways of working, we have built a dedicated website – [improvements.ndis.gov.au](https://improvements.ndis.gov.au).

The purpose of the website is to ensure that key information, tools and resources about our new computer system and improved ways of working is available for participants, providers and the disability community ahead of the final assessment so we are ready to go.

The website includes information about each step of the NDIS journey so participants, providers and the disability community can find what they want to know, when they need it.

### Information and engagement opportunities

Our community engagement teams organised 103 events to raise awareness about our new computer system and processes, reaching over 6,900 people in three months.

We spoke to participants, families and carers, disability advocates, community organisations and government services.

The events included webinars, disability and carers expos, conferences and meetings with community and mainstream stakeholders.

Feedback received from these events has informed the development of how we further support participants and the disability community during the national roll out.

In addition to speaking with participants and the disability community about the new system and processes, more than 9,520 providers have attended information sessions as we prepare for the national roll out.

In August 2023, face to face information sessions were delivered to providers nation-wide. Sessions were held in Canberra, Sydney, Newcastle, Melbourne, Geelong, Wollongong, Darwin, Alice Springs, Adelaide, Cairns, Perth and Brisbane.

Virtual sessions for provider groups were held from September 2023, with further sessions scheduled for November 2023.

## 6.7 Alternative dispute resolution for AAT appeals (including the Independent Expert Review trial)

The Independent Expert Review (IER) trial concluded on 30 June 2023 and the evaluation report was published on the NDIS website in November 2023.

The trial has informed improvements in our approach to dispute resolution and formal outcomes of the evaluation of the trial will continue to support ongoing improvements to our future AAT resolution processes.

The IER trial officially commenced in October 2022 with the key objectives to:

- improve the participant's experience of the AAT process by making it faster and less adversarial
- reduce the number of matters needing to go through to hearing, reducing the external legal spend
- inform broader changes to the resolution of disputes arising from NDIA decisions.

The NDIA received funding in the October 2022 Budget of \$5.8 million for the FY22-23 to trial the IER to 30 June 2023. The DSS received \$6.6 million to fund legal advice and advocacy services for unrepresented participants in the trial, through the Independent Expert Review Advice Service (IERAS).

The IER trial was developed with participants, disability advocates, government stakeholders and the disability sector more broadly. The IER trial was one of the Alternative Dispute Resolution initiatives introduced by the NDIA to reduce the NDIS AAT case backlog, including introducing an early assessment team and intensive case reviews. At 30 September 2023, the success of these measures has:

- resolved **7,283** cases since 1 June 2022
- reduced the active caseload by **35.6%** from **4,501** cases at 27 May 2022 to **2,899** at 30 September 2023
- resolved **90%** of the legacy AAT matters that were active in June 2022.

There was an initial expectation that a higher number of matters would proceed through the trial. However, the success of other NDIA initiatives has meant that there was lower than anticipated demand for the IER trial.

The IER trial concluded on 30 June 2023, consistent with Budget funding. As part of the trial (as at 30 September 2023):

- the NDIA has issued **197** invitations to participate in the IER trial and **132** participants have accepted the invitation
- **127** matters have been referred to Independent Experts and recommendations have been received on **122** matters
- average timeframes for the IER process (from invitation to NDIA response to the Recommendation acceptance) is **46 days**
- the NDIA accepted approximately **90%** of recommendations in full or part with the majority of those matters proceeding to settlement under Tribunal orders made following s42C terms of agreement.

Work on the public facing Outcomes Register for IER matters is continuing. Key concerns in considering the publication of information regarding outcomes is ensuring privacy of participants, while providing sufficient information to be meaningful, recognising that NDIS decisions are complex, fact intensive, and highly dependent on the individual circumstances of the participant.

The NDIA's Research and Evaluation Branch is evaluating the IER trial to assess how effective it has been and an Evaluation Report is expected to be finalised in October 2023.



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