



The Hon Christian Porter MP
Minister for Social Services

MC17-000923

Mayor David O'Loughlin
President
Australian Local Government Association
8 Geils Court
DEAKIN ACT 2600

Dear Mayor O'Loughlin

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Christian Porter', written over the typed name 'Dear Mayor O'Loughlin'.

Thank you for your letter of 22 August 2017 regarding the roll out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) in rural and remote areas of Australia. I appreciate the time you have taken to bring this matter to my attention.

The NDIS is a new way of providing support for Australians with disability, their families and carers. The NDIS will provide about 460,000 Australians under the age of 65 with a permanent and significant disability with the reasonable and necessary supports they need to live an ordinary life.

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) recognises that there are unique challenges to service delivery in rural and remote areas. In March 2017, the NDIA released a Rural and Remote Strategy (the Strategy) that details how the NDIA will work with communities, governments and local service providers to deliver the NDIS in rural and remote areas.

The Strategy was developed through extensive internal and external consultation, including insight from trial sites in rural and remote areas. Support for the Strategy was received from the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and the COAG Disability Reform Council (DRC). As you are aware, COAG manages matters of national significance or matters that need coordinated action by all Australian governments. Members include the Prime Minister, state and territory First Ministers and the President of the Australian Local Government Association.

The Strategy recognises the diversity that exists within communities and identifies the varying needs of people with disability who reside in rural and remote areas. The Strategy also outlines the NDIA's commitment to work with communities through:

- identifying and drawing upon strengths and unique characteristics of rural and remote communities to enable greater service delivery opportunities;
- supporting local planning that builds on community strengths and characteristics and is informed through collaboration, engagement and co-design; and
- developing creative supports and services to increase opportunities for people with disability living in a rural or remote areas.

The Rural and Remote Strategy can be found on the NDIS website at:
www.ndis.gov.au/Rural-and-Remote-Strategy.

The NDIA acknowledges that there are challenges in attracting service providers to remote communities and is working to promote service delivery in these areas. To accommodate additional service delivery costs, the NDIS Catalogue Prices are 20 per cent higher in remote areas and 25 per cent higher in very remote areas. Providers may claim the price applicable to where the service is delivered.

In relation to concerns regarding flexible funding arrangements, one of the key objectives of the NDIS as set out in the *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013* (the Act) is to “enable people with a disability to exercise choice and control in the pursuit of their goals and the planning and delivery of their supports”. The Act sets out that a participant plan and the management of funding for supports in that plan should be individualised and directed by the participant. This means participants are able to access support for their self-identified needs, articulated as goals, in their NDIS plan.

One mechanism that enables choice and control is flexibility within a plan’s ‘Core’ budget, which allows participant choice over how funds are used. Participants also have choice and control in the delivery of supports, determining who provides supports and how they are provided. For service providers, that means operating efficiently, competing fairly and understanding that participants are looking for supports and services that meet their individual need and will exercise choice and control about the delivery of those supports and services.

I wish to assure you that the NDIA is committed to supporting people with disability in rural and remote Australia to exercise choice and control, participate in social and economic life and to achieve good life outcomes.

Thank you again for bringing your concerns to my attention.

Yours sincerely



The Hon Christian Porter MP
Minister for Social Services

29 SEP 2017

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