



Psychiatric Disability Services of Victoria (VICSERV)

Key points for NDIS Price Review

There is a significant mismatch between benchmark costs and actual costs in providing adequate mental health services to people with psychiatric disability:

- The current NDIS pricing structure funds disability supports, while not extending to more complex psychosocial supports for people with mental illness.
- Current NDIS prices do not reflect the requirement for qualified and experienced staff, and the essential 'non-client-contact' time (e.g. supervision, ongoing professional development) needed for staff.
- This may result in risks to the client (who may not receive the appropriate support for their needs from a qualified worker); and the worker (who may not have the skills or support required for the nature of the work).

Current NDIS prices do not support the retention of a highly qualified mental health workforce

- In Victoria, 90 per cent of the community mental health sector holds a diploma or higher qualification – a reflection of the nature of the work and the skills required to support people with psychiatric disability in the community.
- Organisations will not be able to afford to retain or recruit to this level of skill under the current NDIS pricing structure. This may lead to an 'exiting' of highly skilled workers and a 'de-skilling' of the mental health support workforce.
- Staff previously working under a community based psychosocial rehabilitation model are finding the transition to a 'disability' model challenging as the pricing structure is too limited and rigid. This also could lead to staff exiting the workforce and a loss of experience and knowledge.
- Recovery-models of care for people with mental illness are at risk if qualified and trained workers are lost.

There is significant discrepancy between State and Federal funding models

- The discrepancy between what organisations were funded (under state arrangements) to provide community mental health services and NDIS funded supports is significant. This places at risk the quantity and quality of workers available to provide supports to people with psychiatric disability in the community.
- There is potential for market failure, particularly in remote areas and a risk of failing to meet the Government's commitment that nobody would be worse off under the NDIS.

Difficulties in providing training, support and supervision and the resulting implications on service quality

- The current pricing structure makes it extremely hard for organisations to provide supervision, ongoing training and upskilling of both the existing and new workforce through professional development. This has implications not only for ongoing quality of service, but also for risk and ethical considerations for the worker.

There is no inclusion for engagement work or supporting new clients to access the NDIS

- There is currently no funding for organisations to support people with psychosocial disability to engage with, understand and access the NDIS (a process that has been estimated at taking 20 hours of time). This puts further pressure on the NDIA or LAC to do this work, and leaves the client at risk of not accessing services.

Price banding will compromise on quality vs quantity of supports

- The Discussion paper states a proposed change to allow participants to 'purchase the full quality of supports included in their plan at the benchmark prices; or a lower quantity of higher quality supports at a higher price'. This suggests a 'trade off' between quality and quantity, and compromises a consumer's right to access what is reasonable and necessary to meet their needs.

The costs to organisations in 'transitioning' to the NDIS is significant

- The majority of mental health services in Victoria are still yet to transition to the NDIS. The administrative and organisational costs to these organisations is significant and many organisations are facing huge financial loss. In all aspects of reduced funding or inability to recoup lost funds, it is the organisation who is responsible for taking on this burden.
- As a result, some organisations are choosing not to provide NDIS services due to the financial strain of the change, ultimately leading to a 'thinning' of the market for consumers, especially in remote areas.

The implications of the current NDIS pricing for community-managed mental health services are potentially:

- The potential exclusion of participants with more complex needs requiring higher levels of staff support and / or the withdrawal of service providers. Alternatively, organisations may choose to *only* take clients with higher value packages.
- The loss of existing skilled and qualified staff and a de-skilling of the workforce. This will impact on recovery-focused psychosocial rehabilitation supports as organisations can only afford to offer generalist disability supports provided by disability workers.
- Service providers may choose to only provide low-priced supports. This limits choice and control and undermines the objectives of the NDIS.