

Questions:

“Can I ask you specifically about the National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS] because there is an opportunity while young people are incarcerated to actually work through the issues of NDIS. Do you see that happening? Do you see any active work occurring? Given the statistics you gave us previously, we know that a lot of the young people who end up in care would qualify for NDIS support, but I fear many of them do not have anyone to take them through what is quite a difficult and challenging process. The system itself is very challenging, requiring doctors' diagnoses and a whole range of check-ups. Do you get any sense within the juvenile system that they are actually starting to address that NDIS as part of the exit support for young people?”

Answer: Researchers suggest that youth justice system should adopt “holistic strategies” to identify and assess disabilities among young people in the criminal justice system, “followed by tailored support delivered at the earliest appropriate opportunity” (Goldson et al, 2020, pg. 146).

Research conducted early in NDIS’ history suggests that young people with complex needs in custody were not being connected to the NDIS and receiving the holistic disability support they need (Baldry, 2014). Yfoundations interviews with Youth Justice caseworkers, conducted in 2019, suggest that connecting young people in custody to the NDIS is often a lengthy, difficult and fruitless process.

This being said, we recognise that the NDIS is expanding rapidly – growing by more than 100,000 participants per year (NDIA, 2020). The NDIS has also introduced recently introduction Justice Liaison Officers, whose role is to “provide a single point of contact for workers within state and territory justice systems to coordinate support for NDIS participants in youth and adult justice systems” (NDIS, 2019).

For more details, we would refer the Inquiry to the speak with the Director of Disability within Department of Communities and Justice.

References:

Baldry, E., (2014), ‘Complex Needs in the Criminal Justice System’ in: Chamberlain, C., Johnson, G., & Robinson, C. (Eds.). (2014). *Homelessness in Australia*. UNSW Press

Goldson, B., Cunneen, C., Russell, S., Brown, D., Baldry, E., Schwartz, M., & Briggs, D. (2020). *Youth Justice and Penalty in Comparative Context*. Routledge.

National Disability Insurance Agency, (2020), Annual Report: <https://www.ndis.gov.au/about-us/publications/annual-report>

National Disability Insurance Scheme (2019) Disability Reform Council update: <https://www.ndis.gov.au/news/3781-disability-reform-council-update>