

# NDIS National Workforce Plan: 2021-2025

## Sector briefing 14 December 2021

### Transcript

Good afternoon everyone welcome and thank you for joining us today for the sector briefing on the NDIS National Workforce Plan: 2021-2025.

I'd like to start by acknowledging that we are meeting today Traditional Lands around the country and I want to acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of those Lands and pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging and extend those respects to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples joining today.

My name is Luke Mansfield and I am the Group Manager in the Department of Social Services responsible for Strategic Policy, Markets and Safeguards. I am really pleased that so many of you have been able to join for this briefing today, we really welcome your ongoing interest in the Workforce Plan and are keen to ensure there is ongoing good consultation with the sector as we seek to implement the Plan's initiatives.

To help the flow of the presentation, can I just ask everyone ensure they are on mute. We will seek to have a short question and answer session at the end of this presentation and may also produce some frequently asked questions depending on what questions are asked at that time and post that along with a copy of this presentation and transcript on the Department of Social Services website.

Today, we are going to showcase implementation progress on four of the Workforce Plan's initiatives:

Initiative 1 – the *A Life Changing Life* campaign;

Initiative 5 – the Boosting the Local Care Workforce Program and workforce optimisation within that;

Initiative 6 – Micro-credentials; and

Initiative 10 – Regulatory alignment and worker screening.

For a brief recap, the NDIS National Workforce Plan was launched by Minister Reynolds on 10 June 2021, and provides the framework to ensure there is a responsive and capable workforce to support the disability sector.

The Workforce Plan sets out three priorities and sixteen initiatives to drive better workforce and participant outcomes and growth. This includes:

Strengthening entry pathways and promoting the benefits of working in the care and support sector to attract more workers,

Training and supporting the workforce; and

Encouraging the effective operation of the market including reducing red tape.

Along with the initiatives that you'll hear about today, we have made significant progress in implementing the Workforce Plan.

A targeted, pre-filled JobActive jobs board that was developed and published on the care and support jobs website. This directs job seekers to jobs in the care and support sector.

Additionally, through the communications campaign partnership that we have with SEEK, targeted jobs boards for aged care, disability and veterans' support have been developed and published on the website.

We have expanded the remit of the Boosting Local Care Workforce Regional Coordinators and Subject Matter Specialists to include aged care and veterans' care providers, as well as working with NDIS providers, educational institutions and employment service providers.

We have also commenced early work to develop the micro-credentials framework, skills passport and professional networks.

Aged care legislation has been changed to recognise NDIS worker screening clearances. This makes it easier for aged care providers and workers, staff and volunteers that support NDIS participants. Information is being disseminated on the changes and enforcement.

The Department of Health has established a cross-agency taskforce within the department and is working with us and the Department of Veterans' Affairs to progress implementation of regulatory alignment and also a single worker screening check across the sector.

We have been actively promoting available telehealth services to support allied health professionals, particularly those in rural and remote communities, to access professional support and supervision remotely.

We've seen continued support for Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations to become registered to deliver NDIS services through the NDIS Ready project.

57 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations across Australia will receive Indigenous Business Support Funding grants, worth \$22,000 each.

The grants support these organisations to register and deliver NDIS services, including engaging business and technical advice to develop better support systems to deliver NDIS services. The funding also provides an opportunity for organisations to scope future Aboriginal-led disability solutions within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The NDIS National Workforce Plan quarterly update from October 2021 contains further details on these recent achievements in implementation and initiatives, and is available on the Department of Social Services' website: [www.dss.gov.au/ndisworkforceplan](http://www.dss.gov.au/ndisworkforceplan). All one word.

In terms of consultation we have been conducting targeted stakeholder engagement to support the design and implementation of Workforce Plan initiatives. There are a range of consultation and engagement activities underway or planned over the next 12 months across those 16 initiatives within the Plan.

Consultation on work to improve alignment of regulation across the care and support sectors has already commenced.

Initial workshops with providers and peak bodies were conducted in October. A background paper was also published on 6 October.

The second stage of consultation opened on 15 November and will occur through to 17 December this year.

Consultation has also commenced to consider the implementation of an enforceable care and support sector Code of Conduct applicable to providers and workers across aged care, veterans' care and disability support.

Consultation findings from these processes will be released in early 2022.

The department has also hosted initial workshops with members of key provider peaks including National Disability Services, Ability First Australia, and National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations in regard to developing a whole of care and support online demand map tool.

Engagement is ongoing with allied health peaks, allied health sector, universities and training organisations with regard to increasing allied student placements in the disability sector. On 10 February we are setting a roundtable specifically to work with the allied health peaks around initiatives within the Workforce Plan.

Consultation with providers, employers and participants will also commence in January to inform the micro-credential and training, professional network and skills passport projects. There will be a coordinated approach to these consultations and information will be provided on the DSS website for people to register if they would like to be involved.

In addition to these targeted consultations, the department will continue to consult with its Advisory Group on Market Oversight, which meets on a quarterly basis and provides insights to us around the implementation of the Workforce Plan and learnings.

The department has also established a Disability Workforce Industry Working Group that reports to the Advisory Group that I just mentioned to support implementation of the Workforce Plan. The industry-led Working Group will provide a forum to collaborate, co-design and jointly implement initiatives.

The working group is co-chaired between the department and National Disability Services who will occupy this position for 12 months before another service provider is elected.

The Working Group also includes representatives from Ability First, Alliance20, Community Services Industry Alliance, Boosting the Local Care Workforce and the Human Services Skills Organisation.

Their first meeting is due to occur tomorrow.

We've really valued the insights provided in the submissions to the Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS, as well as the evidence provided at public hearings, as well as the input that we have received through all the consultations that I mentioned are underway and we will certainly be considering the recommendations in those submissions and in through other feedback that has been provided as we seek to implement the Workforce Plan.

So that's it in terms of a broad overview so we'll now move into specific updates on those four initiatives I mentioned at the start so I'll handover to Jo Hegerty to do a deep dive into the *A Life Changing Life* campaign. Thanks Jo.

Thanks Luke. Can everyone hear me ok? Yep, great. Some familiar faces in the crowd there. Very happy to be here today and presenting some updates on the *A Life Changing Life* campaign. I think last time we spoke was just prior to launch. If you'll bear with me I will just very quickly run through for anyone who is not familiar with the campaign, I will just very quickly run through our objectives broadly and just give a little introduction to the thinking behind the campaign. We launched on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August which is unbelievably four months ago now which is pretty crazy. So yeah, just to remind everyone where we're at, we found when we were doing our developmental research, people, when we interviewed job seekers, they really had very low understanding or awareness of care and support work and we found that people were not really considering this as a place to go looking for a job or a career.

We also found people had a really inaccurate understanding of what the work entailed and there was a little bit of hesitancy or you know fear I guess about what the work actually involved and people they had very outdated impressions of care and support work across disability, aged care and veterans' support. So the research told us that we very much needed to disrupt this perception, you would have seen from the previous slide that the creative that we have gone for is very much edgy, youthful, there's a lot of energy to it and that is to disrupt that current perception that people have.

Broadly speaking we have four objectives for the campaign and that is to:

Raise awareness of care and support work, including the wide range of roles that are available and the wide range of people who are required in the sector. We are also looking to raise awareness of the diverse pathways into jobs and careers.

Also to encourage target audiences to actually take action so that could be going to our campaign website, sharing the resources, talking to other support workers or actually applying for a job.

And then our fourth objective is to raise awareness of the support that new recruits need from employers. So when people are starting to think more about this sector what do they then need to know about the roles themselves.

There is a tiny lag on the slides.

So just a recap on who we are talking to. We have three campaign target audiences. So as I mentioned, job seekers are currently, when we spoke broadly, nationally to job seekers, they weren't currently considering working in the sector even when they have the right skills and qualities.

So the first target audience that we have been talking to is tertiary students. Includes high school students considering their post-high school options.

University and TAFE students who are currently studying allied health, nursing, psychology, sports medicine, social work that kind of thing. But also students who are studying the creative arts which could include dance, music and visual arts.

We just found that within our broad, it was around five percent of people, yes there is a comment there can we have a copy of the slide deck, absolutely we will share that afterwards, yes so we found that within those cohorts there were much higher rates of people who were interested in taking up these roles.

Our second audience, apologies for the lag, our second audience is what we are calling searchers. And searchers are people in their 20s or teens who they may be working in casual or 'filler' jobs, they may be working in hospitality or retail, and they may be looking for work. They're looking for a job they can sort of leave at home, not necessarily looking for a career. They might have not really have found their forever role yet. There they are, searchers. Here we've got Amber and Stevie, Amber is a classic searcher. She was working in retail and she just found that it didn't resonate with her at all, and she says, and there is a case study where I strongly encourage you to go and watch that case study because it's really lovely, the first day on the job as a disability support worker she just knew that she had found the place to be.

So our third audience is transitioners. Now this is quite a broad audience. It tends to skew a little bit older. The previous two audiences tend to be under 35 and this audience tends to skew a little bit older here.

So these are people who are looking for a change in their employment. And it could be that they have had a career or a profession that they have really enjoyed, but now they're looking for something, and they're quite well set up now, and perhaps they're looking to continue working and take their skills and attributes into a new, more meaningful profession.

This cohort also includes recent arrivals to Australia, recent migrants to Australia who through our testing were found to be much more likely to take up working with older people.

Also people who are looking to come back into the paid workforce after time spent caring for family, so what we call informal carers. That could also include parents who are looking to come back to work who don't perhaps have other skills and qualifications.

Also within this audience are people with disability who are looking for work and have a natural affinity towards care and support work, purely for the fact that a lot of those barriers and misconceptions just aren't there because they have had exposure.

So as mentioned the campaign launched on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August. We've recently, we've had two bursts of activity, our first, so across the whole campaign which finishes on the 4<sup>th</sup> of June we've got five bursts of activity. The first, third and fifth have television and then the two in-between, so the first, third and fifth have the full suite so television, out-of-home, digital mobile, Google search, things like if you're watching catch up TV it will pop up on your TV, if you're listening to a podcast it may pop into your podcast as well. Then the second and fourth are the same apart from without television. So our initial research we've had a burst of tracking research to tell us how our ads on TV perform. What we've found is they're proving to be very engaging with our target audiences, which is obviously fantastic. People are responding really well to the creative and we are meeting that objective of getting people to think "oh wow, this sector is really dynamic and vibrant, and I want to know more". Of course, the objective there is from the good engagement that people will take action.

So the call to action for the campaign is to drive people towards the care and support jobs website. We're pleased to report we've had more than 1.3 million views, these numbers are for the end of November so we'd expect they have increased again. So more than 1.3 million views since mid-August and around half a million unique views which is individuals which is really great.

The most popular webpage is the *Now hiring* page because our call to action is very much the care and support sector is now hiring, go to this website and then you can find out more. So that's really great to see we've got 56,000 total views there and what we're finding is people are spending the most amount of their time on the page which discusses what you need to start working. So that shows high engagement and it's a very transferrable space that they're in and they're ready to start thinking about how they might transition themselves into the sector.

We've had nearly 4 million unique users so therefore 4 million individuals would have seen content through our Facebook network, so Facebook network includes Instagram. That's a really great result. We're also seeing really good results on Snapchat and LinkedIn. LinkedIn tends to skew more to our older transitioner audiences and of course Snapchat is for the students and younger audiences.

A really important part of our strategy has been to partner because we don't just want it to be government telling people this is a great vibrant sector. So we have also partnered with a couple of really important organisations to help us get that message across. So we've got a partnership with Junkee. For anyone who is not familiar with this it is a news website for youths. They call themselves 1.8 million informed young people is the audience that Junkee has. If you look in the top of the slide that is what is called a website takeover, I like to make that joke that it makes me feel really old because it's very hectic but that's what the kids like. It's very, this is a really great partnership for us because what Junkee has told us through their own research they are finding that young people are really looking for roles that will you know help them feel good about themselves and also help them live their lives the way they want to live them, so it was kind of a meeting of minds. That partnership is going really, really well. We kicked off on the 18<sup>th</sup> of October and we had the first of two articles go live and performing really, really well. Last count it was around the 50,000 thousand mark of people who had seen that first article.

The bottom tile is our partnership with Year 13. This has just launched recently and we're still waiting for an update on how it's tracking. Again, Year 13 is a, they have a 1.4 million audience base of young people including the end of school audience which is obviously really crucial to us to capture and also really difficult to reach. What they've created for us, and there is a link in the slide deck which you're welcome to have a look at, is called a learning module, so they've taken, through this trusted website that people are already engaging with, they've basically turned a lot of our content into a kind of learning process for people to explore the sector, find our more and it links out to the various resources that are available.

Our third live partnership is with SEEK. We held our second SEEK webinar, I hope some people were able to attend, it was on how to write a good job ad. It was a really fantastic, really actionable, practical workshop for employers to help them write job ads in a way that will perform really, really well through that SEEK platform but also through any other platform, and also noting that SEEK attracts up to 83 per cent of our younger audiences. I think the feedback on that has been really great and we are in the process of putting that recording up onto the website and happy to email that out to anyone who would like to view that.

A really core, actually I should mention, my team will kill me if I don't, we have two more SEEK webinars coming up and we'd love for you to register for those. In February we have

communicating your employer brand, that's your EVP, it's your employer value proposition, that's you know, how to stand out, how to really attract people, and become an employer of choice. Then in mid-April we have broadening your talent pool, and that's very much going to be a point-in-time seminar that's going to look more at, because by April we're going to have a completely different landscape, absolutely Caitlin, so really would encourage you to join those and we're happy to share the link for the registrations if you're not already receiving our communications.

Now I've got a picture here of Ross, Ross he used to run a recycling business, he's a classic transitioner. He is, he used to, yeah he had a recycling business and the bottom fell out of that market and he thought well what can I do and he says he found a little quiz somewhere online and it said he had a bit of a first responder type personality and when he explored it further he decided he wanted to be a nurse. But while he's studying his nursing degree he is also working in an aged care facility and he just loves it. His story is really lovely. So we've published, that's an example of one of the many case studies that we've published on our website recently. We've also got another story about Rodney and Colin. Colin really wanted to go to Mardi Gras, and his support worker Rodney supported him through his whole support network to get him there and that's another really lovely story. Then another one that we've published recently is Geoff and Ruwan who you saw earlier, we've dived more into Ruwan's process and his transition into the sector. He used to run businesses and he's been working in aged care for quite a long time and he particularly enjoys working with veterans.

We've just published about four more and if time permits at the end of this presentation we'd love to play you one of our culturally and linguistically diverse video case study that we've produced with Jackie and Maria so I'll try to speak quickly.

So we've had really amazing engagement in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander space. Ministers Reynolds and Wyatt issued a media release on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September and we've had some really good media coverage. On Facebook we've had a post that features disability support worker Clinton, it just, every time we're on air it just absolutely goes off, heaps of comments, lots of engagement, people just loving it.

Lisa and Greg here have appeared in the Koori Mail on the front page of the employment supplement that they had. We've had interviews on Noongar radio and SBS NITV, we've engaged a campaign spokesperson Carly Wallace who also works for First Peoples Disability Network.

In the culturally and linguistically diverse space, we also issued a joint media release with Reynolds, Colbeck and Hawke that was on the 18<sup>th</sup> of November. Jackie and Maria who are pictured here were published in the Philippine Times, we understand that there is more coverage of them to come. We have also published a story about Indy who is Indian, we've also got Hanan, she is now online, she's Arabic, and of course Jackie as well.

We've got more coming in Korean, Mandarin, Cantonese and Vietnamese.

So what's next? Very quickly I'll just let you know what's on the horizon for 2022. We're exploring more partnerships through our PR activities. We're looking at Libraries Australia is one, and we are also producing, connecting with the career advisers network and also exploring partnerships with Open Universities and trying to get into some of those student organisations including international students.

We've got three more advertising bursts to come. The first is in late-January to mid-February, the next is in late-March to mid-April, and then we've got mid-May to June 4. We'll have out-of-home for all three, we weren't able to do out-of-home until now because everyone was in their home so we're very excited about that. We're looking forward to seeing some of our beautiful assets up there. As I mentioned, two more SEEK webinars, we've just issued the first of the monthly sector newsletters, if you're not receiving them, please let us know and we can add you to the list. We're preparing a career adviser toolkit with things like quizzes and videos, just a little package we can provide to career advisers so that they can be talking to young people about their options including allied health.

I seem to have lost the ability to hit the next slide, but on the very last page are some links to, next one please Caitlin, links to how you can stay connected with us including our email address. And how did I go? Do we have time to play the video? Yes, go for it. Thank you, I'm actually going to let Caitlin the wizard take over.

*Video plays.*

Great. Thanks Luke.

Thanks Jo, thanks very much for taking everyone through that presentation. I just encourage all providers to check out the care and support jobs website to try and look at ways that you can leverage the campaign to attract workers to your organisation. I'm really pleased that we've got about 170 people on the line with us today and hopefully others will be able to look at this material afterwards and we'll post it to our website. So next up we're going to move to Initiative 5 which is Boosting the Local Care Workforce and workforce optimisation and I'm pleased that Renae Lowry has been able to join us and she'll be taking us through the next initiative. Over to you Renae.

Thanks Luke. I feel like I'm hearing voice only, I don't think we were able to get my camera but hopefully the words will speak for themselves. I guess just a little bit of a background for those of you who don't know Boosting the Local Care Workforce, we were announced in the 2017-18 budget as a program primarily designed to help local organisations to build sustainable businesses and to grow their workforce. The program was extended in this year for a further 2 years and expanded, as Luke mentioned earlier, to cover the entire care and support workforce, including Aged Care and Veterans' Affairs providers, as well as other key enablers for the sector, such as RTOs and Employment Services providers.

We have a network of 25 regional consultants around the country including three subject matter specialists. So we have an Allied Health specialist, a Workforce specialist, and a Skills specialist, as well as a National Policy Manager.

Our team have been, over this time, engaging directly with market and we have engaged to date with almost 9000 care and support providers around the country in a variety of ways. So we do that through roundtables and forums, working groups, and direct one to one engagement and support. Primarily our focus is to be an enabler across three main areas. So we look to support organisations to come together to attract and recruit people to the care and support workforce, skill and develop their existing workforce, and optimise their workforce for long-term success.

While we're down communicating with providers in operations, we also collect and collate that intelligence we receive from the market, consolidate it and take it back up to the

Department of Social Services, Department of Health and Department of Veterans' Affairs to help inform ongoing policy development for the sector.

Next slide please. I'm sure everyone at the moment is seeing the media and all the attention and rhetoric around significant workforce challenges right across the country and right across most sectors. We're hearing other countries referring to it as the "great resignation" or the "big quit", but whatever you want to call it, the reality is that COVID-19 has resulted in strong competition for workers both because of closed borders, but also likely the upheaval that has gone on in people's lives and caused them to re-think the things that they value in life and in work.

As the NDIS has rolled out and the general population is living longer we've seen the need to grow this workforce increase, with most of the conversations that we have, focused around attracting and recruiting people to the sector. Though today, I'm going to focus not on recruitment, but on the optimisation element, because the churn in our sector is also very real. So we know that the churn rate, annually, of people in the NDIS is between 17-25%, and this is compared with an average of 12% in other sectors. So obviously, really high rate that if we can keep more people in the operations in the sector, that obviously means less people needing to enter it. Next slide please.

During our engagement with the market we are always extremely fortunate to see some amazing practices occurring and in particular, we have recently gone to market to look for organisations who have been focused on optimizing their existing workforce. These, or all organisations who have dug in to understand the needs of their staff and prioritized the experience that they're having within their workforce. We found when we were looking for this best practice, that there are really four key elements to success when undertaking a workforce optimisation process. If you remove any of these key elements, the success process was obviously severely undermined.

The first element we discovered was that every success story had a "navigator". In many cases, this person was a CEO, or executive member, and almost always they were a very practical person. They always understood the operations of their business and how it worked, and they were often a very determined individual who was persistent and consistent in their approach to driving the project forward. In some cases these were very personable people, and they were able to support people to come on the journey but they were also very task orientated people and were able to keep all of the moving parts of the process going, so real project managers at heart.

The second element in these success stories we witnessed was that they had to have a strong vision. So they were the kinds of people who could see a perfect future state and they could express this vision, they could hold on to it throughout implementation and no matter how difficult things became, they could keep conveying the vision. And it often, in the cases that we witnessed, it often did become quite difficult. These people understood that their role was to use the vision to provide a sense of security and stability and that staff needed to buy into that. That vision gave staff hope and allowed them to buy in to a more secure future within the organisation, so see that the investment that the organisation was portraying in this vision was about sustaining them and their value to the organisation. These navigators also used this vision to help in their upward management to boards, shareholders and owners, and take the approach that it was an investment decision. So the vision needed to see beyond the short-term budget pressures. In the case of NDIS, it needed to see beyond

participant planning cycles as well. So it meant that the organisation bore the risk when participants exercised choice and control and moved out to other organisations. And I guess the thing that I'm most impressed with these organisations, is that we witnessed them really being very, very brave, particularly throughout COVID and an unknown future. But they used that vision to guide them through those risk factors.

The third element was they were all very impressive at thinking with intent. So this ties in closely with the vision, but really it separates out that strategy versus tactics. So organisations looked really closely at their current state and their future desired state and mapped out a really clear process for how they were going to get there. In some instances organisations came across barriers they were not expecting. One organisation, really interesting case study, had 80% of their workforce were casual, they wanted to flip that to having over 80% permanent. They thought their staff were going to love it and that it was going to solve all of their retention issues. But the reality was that staff were actually really sceptical and suspicious and went straight to the union. So it was not something the organisation had anticipated would happen, but when they thought with intent they were able to really collaborate with the union and staff and allay those concerns. That organisation has now got over 90% of their staff on permanent and they've reduced their churn rate to under 25% and it had been over 30% when they were casualised. And I guess if you're looking for monetary value, on top of this, they reported annual salary savings of over 200,000 thousand dollars per every 100 staff they had.

The fourth and final element is additional capabilities. One thing we often see, and I've experienced personally in this sector, is a make do and mend approach, and we always want to do things in-house. All of these success stories we witnessed, they had a clear understanding that success was actually predicated on them bringing in additional supports where they were able to identify their internal deficits. So external enablers were often critical when looking at existing workforce skilling. One provider we met with were able to recruit staff without too much problem, had the right values and attributes but didn't necessarily have the skills or experience required to hit the ground running. This organisation brought in an AASN, an Australian Apprenticeship Support Network provider, who helped guide them through the process of traineeships as a means to on-board and train staff new to the industry. A 100% of their new recruits taken on through this process were retained after six months in their tenure. The AASN was also able to support that organisation to upskill their existing staff to supervise their trainees thereby creating an opportunity for internal skills growth as well. There are a number of opportunities that we look at in terms of thinking about external providers and how we can support staff to gain skills and qualifications. And we will come on to talk about microcredentials as well, later in the presentation. Many of this is supported by government funding, but it is a complex area to navigate, so organisations do need to think about how they can access that external support and to fill those capability gaps. Next slide.

Just finally, some of the things that we know are really critical for organisations to think of, if optimisation is a priority for them, and that's you really need to line up your leaders and your internal champions. They're going to be critical for your success if you're looking to optimise, particularly in this current market. And they will need to be persistent and consistent in driving through that change. Great workforce optimisation also requires a level of organisation maturity to champion it and to think from the perspective of managing risk rather than avoiding it. That's also just a great opportunity to build internal capability.

But organisations have got to be honest, you've got to facilitate a growth mindset, and it's not a one touch process, you don't get to do it once and then say it's done. You always have to be constantly looking at how you can grow and optimise, and grow and optimise to make the most out of it. And if you do the cost benefit analysis, it's always going to be much better to invest in retaining staff and training them, rather than recruiting new ones, particularly when we see, as mentioned on those previous slides, the volume of applications for roles coming right down.

And just, like a final message, as I mentioned, we do have 25 staff around the country, and if you're in any doubt about how we can help, please don't hesitate to reach out. And we're always happy to talk and share ideas, as well as latest trends on recruitment, retention, optimisation and skilling. As mentioned, we do have lots of events, we publish those events on the Boosting website so please head over there if you want to, have a look at what we've got coming up in your area and there's also a contact us section so if you just pop your details in that contact section, someone will reach out to you and we can talk about how the program can support and engage you in that optimisation process too.

Great, thanks very much Renae. Now we were going to move to microcredentials, but just conscious of time, so given we're going to do some more significant consultation around that early next year, we might come back to microcredentials at our next update, in probably March so that you can hear more about that beyond the consultation activity that we undertake. So instead, we'll keep moving on to Initiative 10 which is regulatory alignment and worker screening, and I'm going to now hand to Paul Miller to take us through that work. Thanks very much Paul.

Thanks very much Luke, and thanks very much everyone for giving us the chance to talk about this. Just trying to give you an update on where this regulatory alignment work is up to at the moment. So if I could just have the first slide there Caitlin.

This kind of is a very simple slide meant to capture, if you like, what the issue is, the current state, the whole regulatory alignment work is trying to address. Effectively, what we see is that there's similar care and support services delivered across these three programs, I guess you might call them Aged Care, NDIS and DVA. So they're similar care and support services but they have totally different regulatory requirements and quality and safeguards arrangements in place. So I guess the issue could be looked at from different perspectives.

From a participant or consumer perspective, it can be that there are different levels of protections and quality and safeguard arrangements across the sectors for the similar services.

From a provider perspective, you'll note in this little Venn diagram here, particularly for providers who are kind of operating in more than one sector, they have to meet more than one set of regulatory requirements and understand more than one set of rules and often get different audits or report several times on the one issue, so that's sort of from the provider's perspective as well.

So for a whole range of reasons, the current state has people with differences across these sectors when in fact, the services are very similar. So if you could just move on Caitlin, to the next slide.

So recognising this in the 21-22 Budget, government committed 12.3 million dollars really to do two things. One was to develop a roadmap for the medium to long term in terms of regulatory alignment, and the second was specifically to progress some work in worker screening and a Code of Conduct that I'll come back to.

In relation to the roadmap, a Joint Regulatory Alignment Cross-Agency Taskforce was set up and is being, it's in the Department of Health at the moment. But effectively, while it's in the Department of Health, there's a whole lot of departments, including Department of Social Services, Department of Veterans' Affairs and the two regulators, the Aged Care Quality and Safeguards Commission and the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission are involved in that work in terms of progressing that roadmap. Next slide thanks.

So in terms of the roadmap work and what's happening under there, the key thing that's happening, and Luke kind of mentioned it so I won't dwell on it too long, but there's a whole lot of sector consultation going on in terms of regulatory alignment, is it a good thing, what are the areas that we could align better, and how would we go about doing that.

The consultations effectively have been so far in two stages, the first stage is really asking that very basic question about how people are experiencing the regulation in the different programs, and whether they think alignment is a good idea.

And then the second stage, which is going on sort of now and is still ongoing till the 17<sup>th</sup> of December, and there's also a survey that goes, is going out, will continue into January that people can fill in. But effectively, that's looking at a bit more detail around the different regulatory elements such as registration and audits and so on, complaints, and how people think they could be aligned better. So those two consultations have been going on and findings I think as Luke mentioned, will come out early in 2022 and it will feed into the development of that regulatory alignment roadmap. Next slide please Caitlin.

I just thought I'd touch on briefly, three projects that are actually being led in DSS that kind of are supporting that regulatory alignment work over time. The first is the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Framework Review, the second is looking at Disability Service Grants and Procurements, and the third is looking at Consumer Information. I'll just very briefly go through each of those. Caitlin next slide please.

So in terms of the Framework Review, so this relates, basically the Framework outlines all the regulatory kind of approach within the NDIS, so one of the circles, the programming circles that was in the very first slide, and effectively the Framework was set up in 2016 and agreed to by all states and territories and then has been progressively implemented as the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission has been stood up and has expanded its remit to all states and territories. And as a part of setting that up initially, it was agreed that there would be a review of the Framework to see that it still was being fit for purpose once it had been implemented because it was the first time, in a sense, that a lot of these regulatory requirements and regulatory processes had been one, put in the one agency, but also, had been run at a national level in the way that it had. And of course, the NDIS itself was new as well. So it was appropriate to review the Framework. That's effectively going to start this year.

In terms of actually trying to, starting to get a consultant on board, they probably won't be on board until early next year. And then during 2022, there will be the review of Framework and all the different elements within that Framework.

In terms of the scope for that review, the Minister signed off on an early version of the scope, that's been worked through with states and territories and Disability Ministers will be given a final copy of the provisional scope fairly soon, and we'll be conducting, we will be engaging the consultant to conduct the review based on what we've called a provisional scope because something that's really quite important in this is making sure the kind of sector is comfortable with scope. So once the consultant comes on board, one of their first tasks will be to test that scope with the sector to ensure that it does cover everything we need to in terms of the setting up the review and giving us a program to work forward in undertaking the review. Next slide please Caitlin.

The second piece of work is looking at grants and procurements within the Department of Social Services and effectively, at the moment, the current state is a bit similar to the different sectors I guess, that different grants have different quality and safeguard arrangements in place. So this whole project is about looking at those different arrangements and seeing if we can gain greater alignment for the similar reasons, consistency of levels of protection and also making it easier for providers to sort of meet the requirements and those kind of things. So similar kind of logic as to why we're doing this, but it's just looking at it in the grants and procurements space.

So initially it was whether we can align it in the grants space but then also, how that might align with say the NDIS quality and safeguard arrangements, and then in the slightly longer term more broadly with arrangements across the three program areas in line with the broader regulatory alignment approach. So we're currently, this is the project we're conducting internal to DSS at the moment and we're currently developing a framework as to how you might approach that sort of alignment work. And then once that's been developed and socialised and kind of worked through within DSS, it'll then feed in to the broader alignment work. Next one please.

The Consumer Information Project, this is really about understanding what type of consumer information is really going to help people navigate. In the first instance what we're looking at is sort of the NDIS market, and the reason we're looking at this is because there are, and this goes to the sort of broader regulatory alignment work again, that Aged Care have a whole lot of information available for consumers to help them navigate the market. So does, we have to some extent, some of that stuff in the NDIS as well. So this whole project is to look at, broadly, what type of information will help consumers navigate the market, and in particular, some of the types of things that are available in Aged Care, are they relevant and useful as well for the NDIS sector. So that's sort of what that project is about. Again, that one again involves engaging a consultant to help us with that work and that will happen again early in 2022. Next one Caitlin.

I mentioned before that all that I've talked about above is about the roadmap side of things. There's also some early sort of announcements, or moves that the government has already committed to in terms of regulatory alignment.

The first one is worker screening. So there's already an NDIS worker screening check that's been rolled out as of February this year, and the decision by government was that that would become, if you like, a care and support sector worker screening check, and those checks would apply across the three programs that we've been talking about from 1 July 2022. Now, worker screening, while there's a broad national policy design, states and territories actually are the ones who kind of actually do the worker screening. They've given in-principle support

to align across the sectors, or across the care and support sector at least, across those programs but there needs to be still a lot of operational work undertaken with states and territories to implement that. But once it's in place, it'll mean that a worker who's cleared, who gets a care and support sector check, will be able to work nationally across any of those program areas and any providers in that thing.

Okay, next one is the Code of Conduct. So again, government took the decision in the budget context, that there'll be a single care and support sector Code of Conduct that is very much based on the existing Code of Conduct for the NDIS. And there's a consultation paper being developed and circulated around, and we're getting feedback on that at the moment, with a, as I say, a draft kind of Code of Conduct based on the NDIS Code of Conduct, generalising it so it can work across the care and support sector. And looking for feedback on that as to whether, in its current form, or what kind of changes might need to happen to make that, or turn that into a single Code of Conduct for the care and support sector. So I think that's that one. Next slide please.

Just in summary, the next steps basically consultant engaged to undertake the Consumer Information Project where we're looking to get a report back, hopefully in March or April in 2022. Engage a consultant for the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Framework Review early in 22 but it'll go with a report due back in December 22. And basically, us, DSS, continuing to work with the Regulatory Alignment Cross-Agency Taskforce and stakeholders to develop that regulatory roadmap that I've talked about. And also, us working very closely with the Department of Health and Department of Vets' Affairs on the worker screening and Code of Conduct reforms due to be implemented by 1 July 2022. So hopefully that gives you a bit of a feel for what's going on in this space and a bit of an update. Thanks Luke.

Thanks very much Paul. Well I'm conscious that we're at 3:59 so we will close this webinar now but I just want to thank everyone very much for attending today. We value your insights and want to keep you informed throughout the implementation of the Workforce Plan.

Thanks to Jo, Renae and Paul for presenting today, and also to Suzanne and Caitlin and team for organising this event.

As I mentioned at the start of the presentation, a copy of the presentation and transcript from today will shortly be available on the Department of Social Services' website, [www.dss.gov.au/ndisworkforceplan](http://www.dss.gov.au/ndisworkforceplan).

If you have any further questions arising from today's webinar, please don't hesitate to get in contact with us at [NDISworkforceplan@dss.gov.au](mailto:NDISworkforceplan@dss.gov.au). Thank you very much everyone for your participation and talk to you in 2022. Thank you.