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## Overview



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## Chapter 1.1 Our Department

### Chapter 1.1

# Our Department

The Department of Social Services is a critical source of social policy advice for the Australian Government. We work in partnership with other government and non-government organisations to ensure the effective development, management and delivery of policies, programs, and services focused on improving the lifetime wellbeing of people and families in Australia.

The Department of Social Services' policies and services respond to people's needs throughout their lives.

We fund services and payments that assist families, children and older people, provide a safety net for people who cannot fully support themselves, enhance the wellbeing of people with high needs, assist those who need help with care and support a diverse and harmonious society.

**Our vision: We aspire to be Australia's pre-eminent social policy agency.**

**Our mission: To improve the lifetime wellbeing of people and families in Australia.**

What we aim to do:

- » support people and families to participate economically and socially in Australian society
- » enhance the independence and wellbeing of people with high needs
- » foster a cohesive community and promote civil society
- » provide a safety net for people who cannot fully support themselves.

How we do it:

- » being responsive to our Ministers and Assistant Ministers
- » delivering creative policy options and solutions for government
- » ensuring rapid closure on issues
- » working effectively as a team
- » communicating concisely
- » effectively managing our budget.

We are supported by:

- » a capable, informed and adaptive workforce
- » efficiently managed resources to address priorities
- » strong governance and risk management.

## Outcomes

The five portfolio outcomes, and their corresponding purposes are covered in more detail in Part 2 of this report.

Outcome 1: Social Security

Outcome 2: Families and Communities<sup>1</sup>

Outcome 3: Ageing and Aged Care<sup>2</sup>

Outcome 4: Housing

Outcome 5: Disability and Carers

Our Department is part of the Social Services Portfolio with the Department of Human Services (DHS), which is administered separately.

1 Responsibility for Outcome 2 Programs 2.4–2.7 transferred to the Department of Education and Training as a result of the Administrative Arrangements Order (AAO) of 21 September 2015.  
2 Responsibility for Outcome 3 Programs 3.1–3.6 transferred to the Department of Health as a result of the AAO of 30 September 2015.

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### DSS executive

Our Department is led by the Secretary and four deputy secretaries each overseeing a stream of work.



#### **Finn Pratt AO PSM, Secretary**

Finn Pratt has a public service career spanning more than 30 years and during this time he has driven major government priorities including a review of Australia's welfare system and reforms in disability services.

Finn has been the Secretary of the Department of Social Services (DSS) since it was formed in September 2013. He is responsible for setting the strategic and corporate directions of our Department and portfolio, and provides senior policy advice to the portfolio Minister and Assistant Ministers.

He is the Chair of the Australia and New Zealand School of Government Board of Directors and is a member of the Jawun Board. He represents the Department on a variety of government, industry and business forums. Finn also chairs our Indigenous Reform Committee.

Finn was awarded a Public Service Medal in 2008 and in June 2015 became an Officer of the Order of Australia for distinguished service to public administration, to social policy development and government service delivery reform, and to care and support for people with disability, their families and carers.

Finn has a Bachelor of Arts degree from the Australian National University.



**Serena Wilson PSM,  
Deputy Secretary**

Serena heads our Social Security stream, overseeing policy and management of social security payments to individuals as well as welfare reform across the whole social security system. She is also responsible for housing policy.

Serena is responsible for establishing our policy framework and strategy, creating a long term planning and performance culture, and promoting strong evidence based systems. She is also Chair of the Policy and Regulatory Reform Committee.

Serena was awarded a Public Service Medal in 2014 for services to public administration in social policy, including her work to establish the NDIS.

Serena has a Bachelor of Arts (Political Science) degree with honours from the University of Melbourne and a Graduate Diploma in Administrative Studies from the Chisholm Institute of Technology.

**Barbara Bennett,  
Deputy Secretary**

Barbara Bennett leads our Families and Communities Stream, which oversees policy development and programs in the areas of families, children, family safety, multicultural affairs and settlement services. Barbara is responsible for the Program Office which designs, manages and administers grants and administered procurement funding for the Department, and also supports the Government's civil society agenda. Barbara also leads housing programs and homelessness policy and programs.

Barbara joined our Department as a deputy secretary in September 2013 and, before that, was a deputy secretary of the Department of Human Services (DHS). She chairs the Program and Delivery Board and is Deputy Chair of the Policy and Regulatory Reform Committee. She is the co-chair of the Infrastructure, Communication and Technology Committee.

Barbara has a Bachelor of Arts degree from the Australian National University.

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## Chapter 1.1 Our Department



### **Michael Lye, Deputy Secretary**

Michael Lye is Chief Operating Officer and the Deputy Secretary responsible for the Corporate and Delivery Stream.

Michael leads our delivery strategy and operations, project management, regulatory reform and finance functions. He also heads our legal, corporate services and information management and technology operations.

Michael chairs the People and Communications Committee, the Budget Committee, and he is the co-chair of the Infrastructure, Communication and Technology Committee. He is the Department's Indigenous Champion, overseeing our efforts to increase employment of Indigenous Australians.

Michael has a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Master of Social Welfare Administration and Planning, both of which are from the University of Queensland.

### **Felicity Hand, Deputy Secretary**

Felicity Hand has been our Deputy Secretary responsible for the Disabilities and Carers Stream since March 2014.

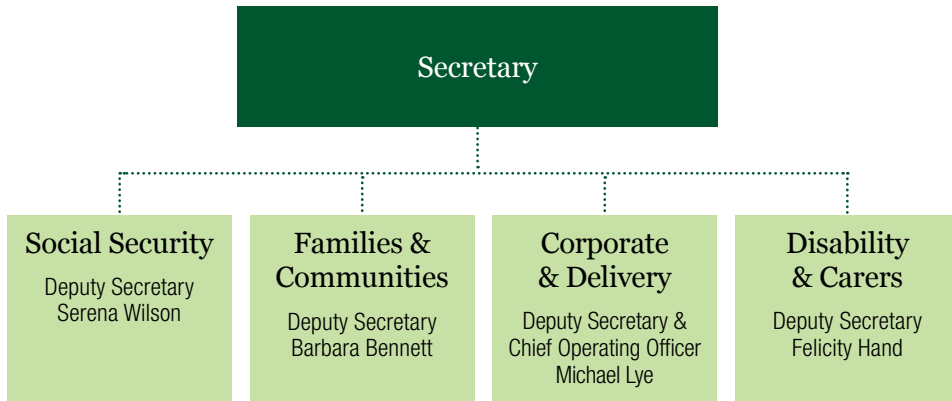
Previously she was a deputy secretary and the Chief Operating Officer of the former Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) until February 2012.

Felicity's responsibilities include disability and carers, disability employment services, problem gambling, mental health and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Policy Taskforce.

She chairs the Audit and Assurance Committee and is also our Disability Champion.

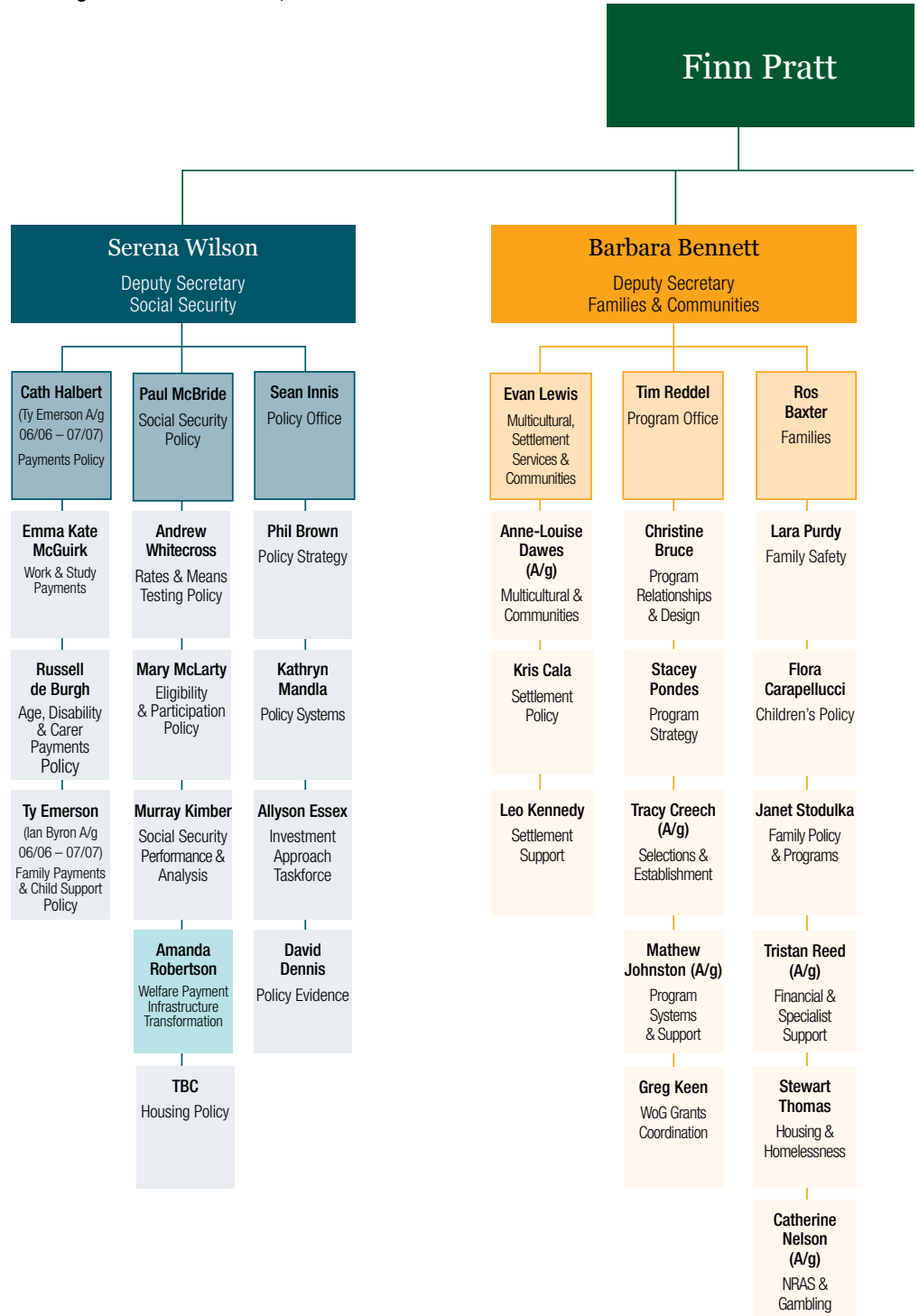
Felicity has a Bachelor of Arts (Languages) degree from the University of Tasmania.

Figure 1.1.1: Our executive and streams of work

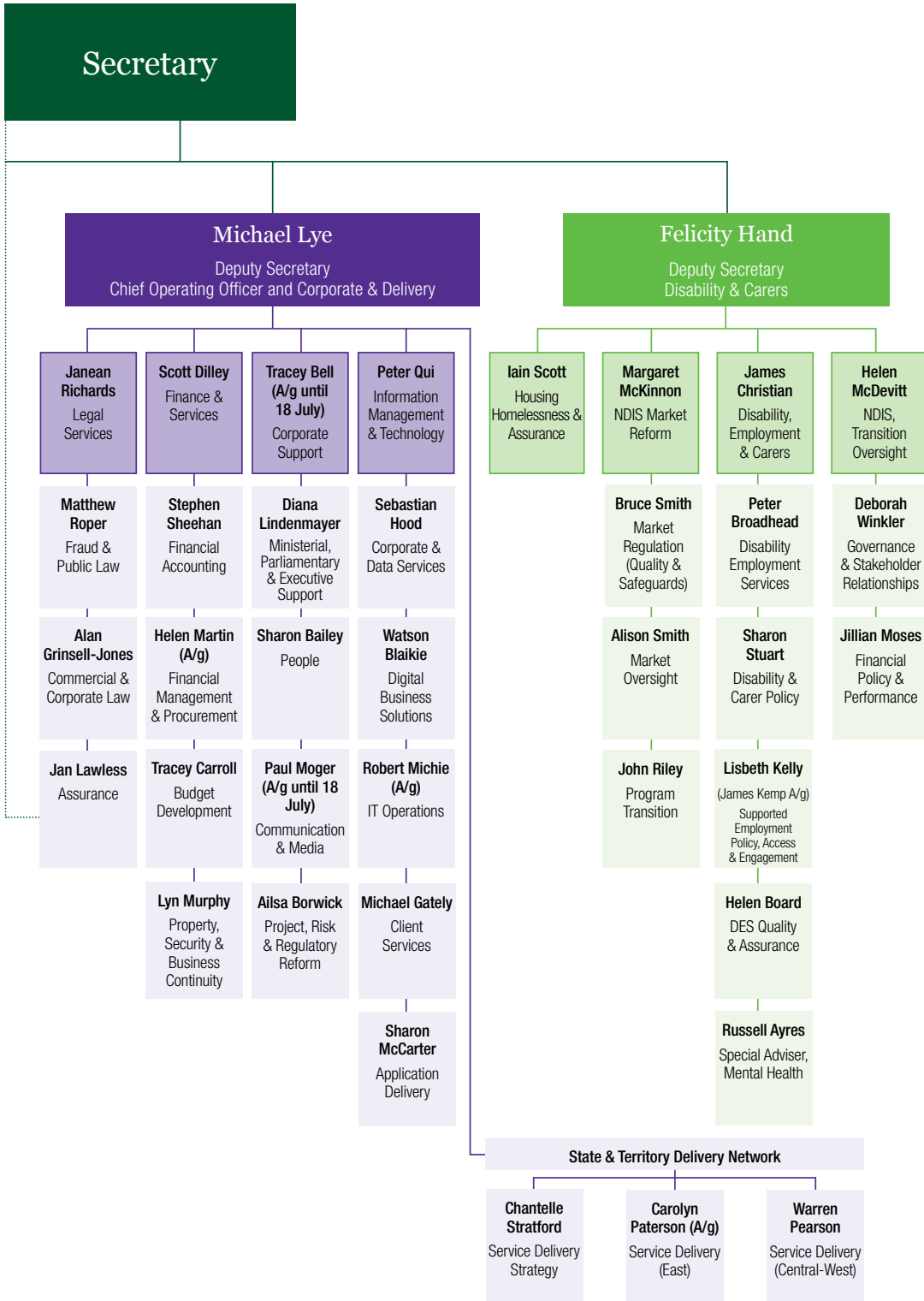


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Figure 1.1.2: Organisational structure, as at 30 June 2016







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## Chapter 1.1 Our Department

### Our people

Our Department delivers a diverse range of social policies and programs. In terms of both people and places, our reach is wide, extending to the most remote parts of Australia and, in the course of their lives, to most Australians.

While DSS operates across Australia, more than three-quarters of DSS employees are based in Canberra, ACT, in Tuggeranong and Woden.

National Office staff are engaged in a wide range of activities including policy development and implementation, program design, social policy research, and modelling and evaluation.

Our delivery network comprises departmental staff located within state, territory and regional offices throughout Australia. Around a fifth of our staff are based in the delivery network and are responsible for:

- » the effective management of grants and administered procurement for services to Australians, reviewing service provider performance and resolving complaints
- » working with state and local government, non-government organisations and the community sector to improve services to Australians
- » sharing of local knowledge to inform program and policy development and regulatory practice.

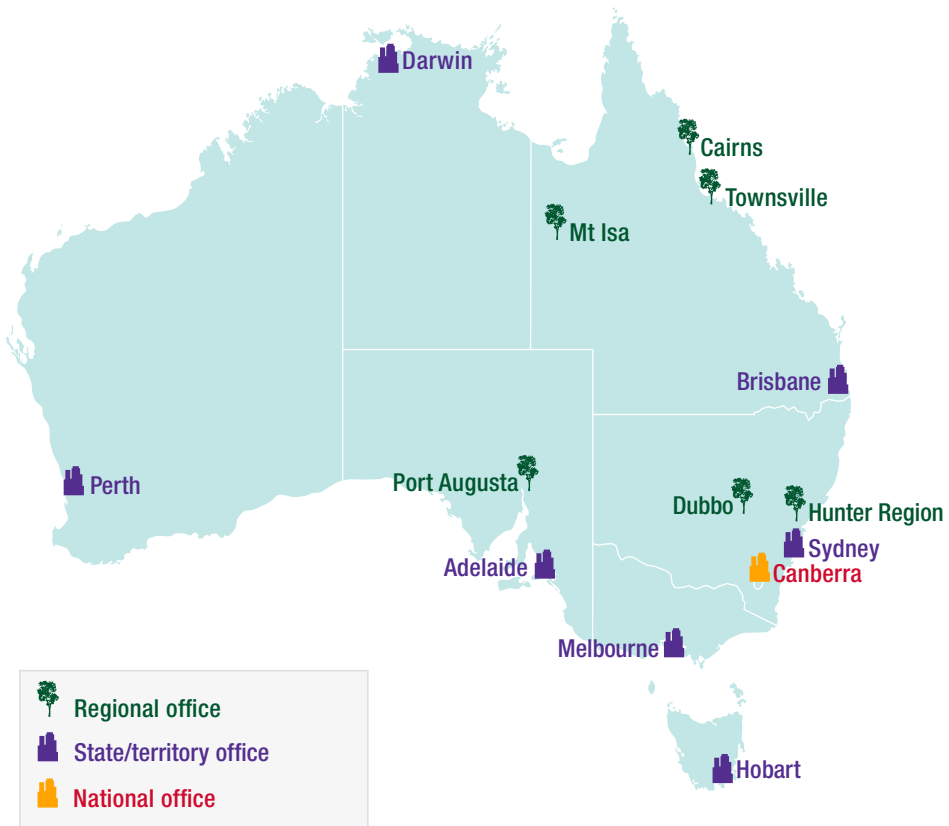
The delivery network works with our national office to help deliver policy and program outcomes.




### Our values

Our values reflect those of the broader Australian Public Service and are central to the way we work with our Ministers, colleagues, stakeholders and the public. This includes being:

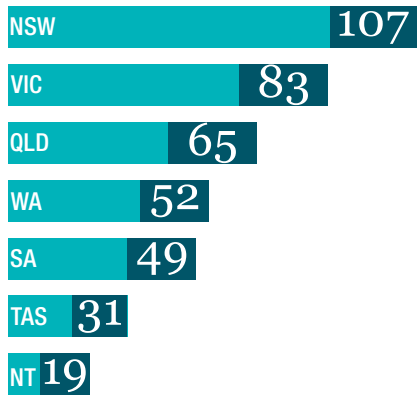
- » **Impartial:** we are apolitical and provide the Government with advice that is frank, honest, timely and based on the best available evidence.
- » **Committed to service:** we are professional, objective, innovative and efficient and work collaboratively to achieve the best results for the Australian community and the Government.
- » **Accountable:** we are open and accountable to the Australian community under the law and within the framework of Ministerial responsibility.
- » **Respectful:** we respect all people, including their rights and heritage.
- » **Ethical:** we demonstrate leadership, are trustworthy, and act with integrity, in all that we do.

Figure 1.1.3: Our national presence, as at 30 June 2016



-  Regional office
-  State/territory office
-  National office

Staff numbers in our delivery network



Staff numbers in the national office



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The portfolio

## Chapter 1.2

# The portfolio

### Improving lifetime wellbeing

Social policies and programs essential to the lifetime wellbeing of people and families in Australia are delivered by Commonwealth agencies and office holders in the Department of Social Services' portfolio.

We work with other government and non-government organisations to develop, manage and deliver social policies and programs that support and improve wellbeing by encouraging people's independence and participation.

**Figure 1.2.1: Department of Social Services' portfolio, as at 30 June 2016**

Ministers responsible for our portfolio

#### Minister for Social Services

The Hon Christian Porter MP

#### Assistant Minister for Multicultural Affairs

The Hon Craig Laundry MP

#### Assistant Minister for Disability Services

The Hon Jane Prentice MP

Department of State (non-corporate Commonwealth entity)

#### Department of Social Services

Secretary  
Mr Finn Pratt AO PSM

Portfolio body (non-corporate Commonwealth entity)

#### Australian Institute of Family Studies

Director  
Ms Anne Hollonds

Portfolio body (corporate Commonwealth entity)

#### National Disability Insurance Agency

Chief Executive Officer  
Mr David Bowen

## Our Department

### Department of Social Services (DSS)

**Our Mission:** Improve the lifetime wellbeing of people and families in Australia.

Our Department is a critical source of social policy advice for the Australian Government. We work in partnership with other government and non-government organisations, particularly with the Department of Human Services (DHS), to ensure the effective development, management and delivery of diverse policies, programs and services focused on improving the lifetime wellbeing of people and families in Australia.

[www.dss.gov.au](http://www.dss.gov.au)

## Portfolio bodies

### Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS)

**Outcome:** Increased understanding of factors affecting how families function by conducting research and communicating findings to policy makers, service providers and the broader community.

The Australian Institute of Family Studies researches and communicates information about factors that affect Australian families. It provides an evidence base for developing policy and best practice for the wellbeing of families in Australia.

[www.aifs.gov.au](http://www.aifs.gov.au)

### National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)

**Outcome:** To implement a National Disability Insurance Scheme that provides individual control and choice in the delivery of reasonable and necessary care and supports to improve the independence, social and economic participation of eligible people with disability, their families and carers, and associated referral services and activities.

The Agency implements the *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013* (NDIS Act). It provides individual control and choice in the delivery of reasonable and necessary care and supports to improve the independence, and the social and economic participation of eligible people with disability, their families and carers. The Agency will also play a key role in building community awareness and understanding of disability matters to reduce the barriers to community inclusion for people with disability, their families and carers.

[www.ndis.gov.au](http://www.ndis.gov.au)