

Media Release

**Fewer people with mental health conditions are transitioning to the NDIS than expected...
and it is taking far longer than anticipated**

A team from Community Mental Health Australia (CMHA) and the University of Sydney have today released alarming findings about the adequacy of support that will be available for people living with serious mental illness outside of the NDIS when three Commonwealth funded support programs cease in 2020.

The report shows that 50% of people currently utilising the Partners in Recovery (PIR), Personal Helpers and Mentors (PHaMs) and Support for Day to Day Living (D2DL) national programs have not yet applied for the NDIS. More worryingly, only half of those who have applied have been deemed eligible to enter the NDIS.

CEO of the Mental Health Council of Tasmania and CMHA member, Connie Digolis, says, *'We know the Commonwealth government has recently announced additional funding through to June 2020 to support people in these programs to move across. Today's findings highlight that the assessment and approval of NDIS plans is often taking many months. Our governments have made a commitment that no one will be left behind. We need a guarantee that next June, individuals who are still outside of the scheme for whatever reason will have supports in place.'*

'The challenge for people with a serious mental illness is knowing how they will access the supports they need into the future. The process to prepare an application is onerous, only to be followed by exceptionally long wait times to find out if they're eligible. Given these people are already accessing supports and services, why are we making them jump through these hoops to continue receiving support that has already been warranted, and worse, making them wait so long to know how they'll access them?', said Ms Digolis.

The report highlights significant concerns regarding the barriers and hurdles for people with a psychosocial disability and the NDIS, including a higher than expected rate of people who are deemed ineligible.

University of Sydney project lead, Dr Nicola Hancock, said that, *'We are reporting on over 8000 Australians living with mental illness in this project. This report presents a large set of national data that evidences the barriers that people living with mental illness are experiencing as they apply to transition into the NDIS. It also highlights the very real risk that many people with serious mental illness will lose much needed supports when current Commonwealth programs close in June next year to fund the NDIS'* *ENDS

[Read full report here.](#) Background to the report on following page

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Please include the following crisis support services for any story regarding mental health or suicide.

Lifeline: 13 11 14 www.lifeline.org.au

Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467 www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au

beyondblue: 1300 22 4636 www.beyondblue.org.au

More information on safely reporting on mental illness or suicide can be found at

<https://mindframe.org.au/> and <https://www.tascharter.org/>

Background

The Commonwealth Mental Health Programs Monitoring Project stems from the ongoing and growing concerns around the lack of accessible and transparent data on the numbers of people currently accessing existing support services who are successfully or not successfully transitioning into the NDIS.

The Commonwealth has provided \$121M to support individuals who are still in the process of moving into NDIS for a further 12 months; with the expectation that after this 12-month extension, people will have applied for and transitioned to NDIS or alternative funded options. There are concerns that the Commonwealth Continuity of Support funding - for those not eligible for NDIS - will not be adequate to support the number of people in these programs who will not be able to access the NDIS.

The key findings of the project are as follows:

- Overall, 50% of people currently using PIR, PHaMs and D2DL have not yet applied for NDIS. 1578 (19%) of the 8162 people in this report do not want/are unable to apply or have, to date, not started the complex process of building the evidence required to apply.
- Of the 50% of people who had applied, only half had been assessed as eligible, a quarter had been found ineligible and a quarter were still waiting to be assessed, or the outcome was unknown.
- Thus, of the currently active PIR, D2DL and PHaMs clients, 25% are now supported through the NDIS and 75% are not.
- There are also continuing problems within the NDIA. The 61 programs reported wild variance in: the proportion of people with eligible/ineligible outcomes, the lengths of time people had to wait for applications to be assessed, and for those found eligible, the length of time before they received their plan, and the appropriateness of plans.

31 organisations across the country provided data on 61 PIR, PHaMs or D2DL programs, collectively contributing to the report to create a robust national 'picture'. Only with transparency can we assess whether the needs of people living with mental illness are being adequately planned for within and beyond the NDIS, or if poor policy and planning is placing these vulnerable Australians at risk.

Partners in Recovery (PIR)

PIR is a national initiative aimed at improving service to people who experience severe and persistent mental illness and who have complex needs. PIR helps by getting multiple sectors, services and supports with which they come into contact (and could benefit from) to work in a more collaborative, coordinated and integrated way.

Personal Helpers and Mentors (PHaMs)

PHaMs provides practical assistance for people aged 16 years and over whose lives are severely affected by mental illness. PHaMs helps people overcome social isolation and increase connections with their community. People are supported through a recovery focused and strengths based approach that recognises recovery as a personal journey driven by the participant. Potential participants undertake a functionally based assessment with a PHaMs service provider to determine their eligibility for services.

Support for Day to Day Living (D2DL)

The "Support for Day to Day Living in the Community (D2DL): a structured activity program" provides funding to improve the quality of life for individuals with severe and persistent mental illness by offering structured and socially based activities. The initiative recognises that meaningful activity and social connectedness are important factors that can contribute to people's recovery.