

2017: A Year in Review

Without any fear of contradiction I can state that 2017 was one of the most disruptive and turbulent years in the history of disability services in this state. Not since December 1992, when we observed the establishment of the Disability Services Commission under the WA Disability Services Act (1992) has there been so much change in our sector.

To reiterate the major changes that occurred last year can be summarised as follows:

- A Bilateral Agreement was announced in late January 2017, signed by the Commonwealth Government and the State Coalition Government, preceding the implementation of the 'caretaker period' prior to the state election.
- As you are aware, the state election was held on 11 March where the Labor Party swept to power. Shortly afterwards, a review of the recent Bilateral Agreement was announced, a process which proceeded over the next eight months.
- In July, the Disability Services Commission was amalgamated with three other state government agencies, namely the Department of Child Protection and Family Support; the Department of Housing; and Local Government and Communities. After 25 years of operation, there is no separate state agency with the specific responsibility for the policy, procurement and provision of services for people with disabilities. The Premier assures us that this major change will not negatively influence the outcomes for people with disabilities, their families and carers.
- A new Bilateral Agreement was announced in December 2017 and is briefly described in the previous [Chair Chat](#) released in mid-December.

Where we have landed:

- The transition of approximately 8,400 current WA-NDIS clients to the national system will occur from April to December 2018. The national agency will manage the scheme in WA from July 2018.
- As part of the transition process, up to 200 Local Area Coordinators (LAC) will transfer from the state government to the national agency over the next few years.
- The scheduled timeline to June 2020 will remain in place. Nulsen houses located in the North metropolitan region will commence transition in October 2018.
- Houses in the South East metropolitan region will transition from 1 July 2019. The majority of Nulsen's services will commence transition into the National NDIS and require all service users to develop new person centred funding plans.
- Information sessions will be conducted for residents and families who will be affected by this schedule.
- The overall transition timeline in WA will extend to June 2023 and the number of people served will increase to 47,941 by this time. This will be an excellent outcome for people living with disabilities, their families and carers.

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- The existing quality management process remains in place until June 2020 and the national system will take over from 1 July 2020.
- Nulsen Disability Services is pleased to note a mechanism for a provider of last resort was retained within the WA disability services system. This provision is lacking in a number of the other jurisdictions resulting in risky circumstances for many individuals who fall in between service systems.
- The terms of the new Bilateral Agreement will mitigate the future financial risks for the State Labor Government and results in a better outcome for the state government.

Nulsen Disability Services is pleased that a decision is finalised and now we can plan future services with more certainty. Along with a number of disability sector organisations, Nulsen is requesting the State Labor Government invest to support the ongoing development of the disability sector workforce and provide transition funding to assist with the implementation of the Commonwealth NDIS framework.

We are encouraged by the following statement: *"The NDIA recognises the critical importance of having a vibrant provider market that delivers participants with quality, timely supports. (Dr Helen Nugent, Chairman of the National Disability Insurance Agency). Nulsen Disability Services will endeavour to be an active and lively participant in the future 'vibrant provider market.'"*

In next month's edition, I will focus on the future known directions and pathways during 2018.



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Professor David Gilchrist is a chartered accountant and a historian. He holds a PhD in economics from the University of Notre Dame Australia and is currently a professor of accounting at the University of Western Australia. Over his 25-year career, David has held many senior roles in the not-for-profit, commercial and public sectors. He has taught at several universities across the globe, sits as Chairman on multiple boards and has published several key national reports. A few of his achievements include; working as the Assistant Auditor General for Western Australia, and the Associate Dean of the School of Business, University of Notre Dame Australia. As a Chairman to Nulsen Disability Services, and the Kimberley Individual and Family Support Association. Also producing the "Australian Charities 2013" and the "Australian National Costing and Pricing Framework" issued jointly with National Disability Services. He is widely published as an academic and a journalist. [See David's full profile here.](#)