



**The Hon Stuart Robert MP
Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme
Minister for Government Services**

Ref: MC20-005163

Mr Stephen Williamson
Chief Executive Officer
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Dear Mr Williamson

Thank you for your correspondence of 25 March 2020 to the Minister for Families and Social Services, Senator the Hon Anne Ruston and myself, regarding the coronavirus (COVID-19) and the transition of hearing paediatric services and the National Auslan Interpreter Booking and Payment Service (NABS) to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). I am responding to your letter as the matters raised fall within my portfolio responsibility.

From 1 July 2020, the NDIS will operate alongside the Hearing Services Program (HSP), which will continue providing essential hearing health services to eligible HSP clients. While in-kind arrangements through Hearing Australia will end on 30 June 2020, there is no transition of paediatric hearing services to the NDIS.

For eligible participants, the NDIS funds additional reasonable and necessary supports and services outside the HSP, including hearing services for participants who are not eligible for the HSP.

I understand the Department of Social Services (the department) is establishing a stakeholder reference group to provide advice on the circumstances in which hearing services available through the HSP may be funded by the NDIS, to ensure a smooth transition from in-kind arrangements from 1 July 2020. I understand the Department of Social Services will be in contact, if they have not done so already, to discuss this in further detail.

In relation to NABS, I understand the department is working with the provider, Wesley Mission Queensland, to put in place flexible arrangements to ensure Auslan services are not disrupted.

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring vital services continue to be available to vulnerable Australians at this time, including hearing services and Auslan interpreting for medical appointments.

The department, together with the National Disability Insurance Agency and NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, will continue to work with representatives of the deaf and hard of hearing community, professional bodies and providers to implement transition arrangements and ensure continued access to quality government funded hearing supports and services.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stuart Robert', written in a cursive style.

Stuart Robert