

Timelines of change

The last decade has seen a torrent of change, reform and disruption to human services.

The Commonwealth has signalled intent to move in and out of funding for social infrastructure areas like housing, disability, legal services and even volunteering – sometimes moving out and then moving back in again within the space of a few months.

Programs have been abolished, tendered or slated for abolition only to be reinstated. Others have been placed on precarious annual contracts, living year from year and unable to plan.

Entire funding paradigms have changed, programs funded since the second world war have been reframed, programs have come and gone and others existing since the 1970s have been merged and consolidated. Ministers have changed and entitlements have changed.

In the ACT organisations have merged, folded, rebadged and pulled out of service offers. And our timeline is just a sample of the kinds of disruption and change that have been experienced in areas of human services program delivery highlighted in the Stories of

Transition. While it shows an almost overwhelming tide of change and policy resets, we've only scraped the surface of change across the broader human services sector as touched on in our stories. For instance, the changes to family, women's, early learning or children's services could easily fill out their own timelines.

There are things to celebrate and changes for the worse but the pace of disruption has left some people wondering if they will ever see clear air or even have time to reflect.

Below are two detailed timelines from seismic change events in Homelessness Services and the 2014 Budget which saw government seek to legislate massive changes to programs and payments. Overleaf is a timeline of some key changes and disruptions in policy and program areas which relate to the Stories of Transition.

Stuck in transition... the story of homelessness funding

Since 2009 homelessness funding has been stuck in a holding pattern of reforms, mooted reviews that were subsequently superseded by other reviews and then cancelled with services clinging to year by year funding ...

- Originally a 5 year agreement on commencement in 2009 the NPAH was extended in 2013 for 12 months by the Gillard Government as a 'transitional' arrangement while a proposed review of housing and homelessness was undertaken.
- This became the first in a series of year by year extensions for the NPAH in 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17.
- Population changes in the ACT due to public service funding cuts over this time see funding to the ACT from the Commonwealth for homelessness services, including advocacy, cut from \$5.9m to \$3.6m despite the ACT developing the second highest level of homelessness in Australia.

- The mooted review did not proceed and was then superseded by the Reform of the Federation processes.
- On 27 April 2016 the Turnbull Government scrapped the reform of the Federation White Paper meaning that the reform of the Federation process would not provide a basis for ongoing homelessness funding².
- The project plan for another 'transitional' agreement in 2017/18 flagged yet another 12 month funding window while "longer term arrangements and reforms to housing and homelessness are progressed for the consideration of the Council of Australian Governments"³.
- In the 2017/18 Federal Budget social housing and homelessness services were offered four year funding and Commonwealth, State and Territory Housing Agreement negotiations on funding outcome measures continued.

2 E Borrello, Malcolm Turnbull scraps federation white paper after \$5 million work, ABC News website, 28 Apr 2016, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-04-28/malcolm-turnbulls-5-million-tax-white-paper-scrapped/7367204>.

3 Queensland Government, Queensland Project Plan: National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness: Schedule A, Queensland Government Department of Housing and Public Works website, 2017, <http://www.hp.w.qld.gov.au/SiteCollectionDocuments/QueenslandProjectPlan20172018.pdf>.

Budget in transition... tumultuous change in the 2014 Budget

The 2014 Budget delivered on 13 May 2014 saw a raft of sweeping changes mooted to services and programs, some of which had been in place for decades. A number of these measures, later called 'zombie measures' were locked in the Senate, some of them for several years. The government sought to legislate that:

- The Newstart Allowance for those seeking work would not be available to people under the age of 25. The unemployed under the age of 30 would not qualify for any payment for six months, after which the Work for the Dole program would be required. If after another six months there is no employment, the six-month cycle of off/on payment starts again.
- The Schoolkids bonus be abolished.
- A Paid Parental Leave scheme be introduced.
- The Seniors Health Card not be available to retired couples with more than \$1.4 million in assets.

- The indexation for pensions be lowered from 2017 onwards, after it is linked to inflation rather than male average earnings.

IN OTHER BUDGET RELATED DEVELOPMENTS:

- New funding for the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) ceased on 1 July 2014 with funding for tenanted NRAS properties continuing.
- The First Home Saver Accounts scheme is to be abolished leading to savings of \$134.3 million.
- The NDIS is retained despite being subjected to six different internal and external reviews, audits and other reports, sometimes simultaneously.
- The disability community loses its voice as the Federal Disability Discrimination Commissioner is not reappointed and the ABC's Ramp Up community is abolished.

2007



2008



2009



2010



2011



2012



2013



2014



2015



2016



2017



Timeline of some key changes and disruptions

2007

26 July, Then Minister Mal Brough announces that the government is considering putting the entire Public and Specialist housing system out to tender. The government seeks proposals from the private and community sector to meet supply needs

21 November, The Howard Government is defeated. The new Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs is Jenny Macklin. The government flags a broad program in the housing, disability and social services area. The mooted changes to public and community housing supply are abandoned and a new set of housing priorities and programs focus on affordable housing.

2008

19–20 April, The 2020 Summit adopts a proposal from the Disability Investment Group for a National Disability Insurance Scheme

2009

January, The National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) commences with joint funding required from states and territories

23 November, The Rudd Government announced that it has given a reference to the Productivity Commission to conduct an inquiry into disability care and support

2010

15 June, Funding for more than 1000 rental units in Canberra at the ANU announced under the government's National Rental Affordability Scheme

2011

26 January, Every Australian Counts campaign for the National Disability Insurance Scheme launched

2 August, Prime Minister Gillard launches reforms to the government's hospital funding agreement with the states and territories, describing it as "the most fundamental change since Medicare" with funds being channelled through local hospital networks and Medicare Locals

10 May, The Federal Budget includes a major shakeup for mental health with a reform package focusing on early intervention, intensive supports and targeted supports

16 May, Katy Gallagher MLA becomes ACT Chief Minister

10 August, The Productivity Commission releases a Report on Disability Care and Support which recommends a new national scheme – the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) – that provides insurance cover for all Australians in the event of significant disability. Funding of the scheme should be a core function of government (just like Medicare)

2012

1 January, New impairment tables see many people shifted from DSP onto Newstart, placing strains on employment and emergency relief services

20 April, Government announces its Living Longer Living Better (LLLLB) package for aged care with a focus on removing the distinctions between low and high level care and changing the fee and service arrangements in residential care¹

16 July, The National Disability Insurance Agency starts work with David Bowen appointed interim CEO

2 August, An expert panel is appointed to oversee the roll out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme in Canberra. The panel is co-chaired by Sue Salthouse

20 October, ACT Election (ACT Labor/Greens returned)

¹ Commonwealth of Australia, Aged Care (Living Longer Living Better) Bill 2013, http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Bills_Legislation/bd/bd1213a/13bd106.

2013

28 March, Legislation to establish the NDIS, the National Disability Insurance Scheme Bill 2013 comes into law after receiving Royal assent

14 May, Appropriations for the NDIS are included in the Federal Budget

14 May, Original a five year agreement NPAH is extended for a year as part of a transitional agreement

11 June, The ACT announces The Enhanced Service Offer – a package of one-off grants (totalling \$7.7 million) that will assist the ACT to transition to the NDIS

August, All new home care packages under aged care reform begin to be deemed as 'consumer directed'

Change of government

7 September, At the Federal election the Gillard/Rudd Labor Government is defeated and the Coalition is returned to office



2014

3 April, Chief Minister Katy Gallagher MLA and Minister for Disability Joy Burch MLA announce a phased withdrawal over three years from Therapy ACT and early intervention services

April–May, DisabilityCare Australia, now renamed the National Disability Insurance Scheme, is subject to widespread funding speculation with internal and external reviews plus falling into scope for the Commission of Audit

13 May, The Federal Budget sees significant cuts to many programs and social welfare on a scale not seen for decades, including emergency relief and legal assistance (see breakout box overleaf)

20 May, Federal Social Services Minister Kevin Andrews announces that the government intends to slash 18 separate discretionary grant programs made up of around 120 grants activities and nearly 13,000 individual grants into seven larger programs under the DSS New Way of Working for Grants initiative. The new programs sees \$240 million less funding available due to budget cuts. There is mass

disruption as thousands of services go out to tender and some such as Emergency Relief Services needing to reapply for the first time

19 June, DSS New Way of Working with Grants round opens

1 July, The Australian Capital Territory joins the NDIS launch phase. The ACT rollout starts with pre-schoolers, people approaching school leaving age, residents of group homes and people close to the age cut off (65 years)

1 July, The Medicare levy increases by half a percent to fund the NDIS

23–24 July, The DSS New Way of Working with Grants process comes under criticism after the sections of the Department's website crash under the weight of applications flooding in near the program's deadline. The application period is extended by 24 hours. 5 572 applications were ultimately received across all funding rounds seeking a total of more than \$3.9 billion in funding, compared to approximately \$800 million in grants available for the sector

21 October, DSS are forced to offer two month extensions to existing service providers after being unable to process more than 5550 grants applications in a timely way

11 December, Andrew Barr MLA becomes Chief Minister of the ACT

22–24 December, DSS New Way of Working with Grants Applicants advised of outcomes of process. A number of organisations are informed they will have no funding just days before Christmas including Financial Counselling Australia, National Shelter, Community Housing Federation Australia, Disability Advocacy Network Australia, Homelessness Australia and Brain Injury Australia

23 December, New Minister for Social Services appointed (Scott Morrison)



2015

1 February, Abbott Government scraps its Stronger Relationships (marriage counselling) program and reinvests money into frontline services with a \$17 million to ensure continuity of frontline community services under the New Way of Working for Grants process

February–March, Comments invited on a draft NDIS Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Framework (ILC)

1 April, Bridging funding offered to Emergency Relief providers defunded in the New Way of Working for Grants process

28 June, Nican closes its 30 year old ACT based office and phone and email information and referral service after a 2014 Federal Government's decision to cut funding to specialist disability information services, despite ILC funding still being unavailable through NDIS

1 July, The third set of aged care reform changes sets up a My Aged Care gateway and rolls together four programs into a new Commonwealth Home Support Programme

6 July, Scott Morrison announces the Commonwealth is signing up to the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness

August, Disability Reform Council (DRC) endorses the Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Policy Framework

24 August, DSS releases a process review into the 2014/15 New Way of Working with Grants Round

16 September, The Senate Community Affairs References Committee released their final report for the inquiry into the 'Impact on service quality, efficiency and sustainability of recent Commonwealth community service tendering processes by the Department of Social Services'

21 September, Christian Porter becomes the New Federal Minister for Social Services

2016

1 April, A cloud of uncertainty emerges over Federal funding for homelessness services. State and territory housing and homelessness ministers including ACT Minister Yvette Berry unanimously call for federal funding certainty for housing and homelessness services via the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) due to expire on 30 June 2017

29 April, The Federal Government announces new funding arrangements for Community Legal Services which the centres claim represents a 30 per cent cut to funding from July 2017

29 May, 26 Canberra organisations providing services to vulnerable young people and families receive a two year funding extension

2 July, Federal Election (Turnbull Government returned)

30 September, The Disability Information Service ceased operation as a centralised point of contact for people seeking information about disability matters within the ACT as the ACT withdraws from service provision

14 October, Concerns emerge that more than 1000 Canberrans with a disability are at risk of missing out on NDIS support as the Territory and Federal governments argue over which government should fund more places after a target of 5075 people was reached in the bilateral agreement

15 October, ACT Election (ACT Labor returned)

2 December, A new Office For Disability is launched by Minister Rachel Stephen-Smith who says that "the ACT Government is staying in the business of supporting people with disability and making sure they are included and engaged in every facet of life"

9 December, The Save NPAH campaign celebrates after the Turnbull Government announces an extension of the NPAH. Services, however, face continued uncertainty via another one year transitional agreement from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018

2017

January, Capital Community Housing (CCH) announces that due to funding challenges it unfortunately can no longer continue to operate in a sustainable way. The work of CCH is folded into Havelock Housing Association

24 January, NDIS Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Grants open

8 February, The Australian Government announces it is abolishing dedicated funding for volunteer referral (the Volunteer Management Program, active for more than 20 years) by folding the Strengthening Communities grants program into the new Strong and Resilient Communities (SARC) grants program

8 March, NDIS ILC Grants close

17 March, Reports emerge that ACT organisation, Self Help Organisations United Together (SHOUT) is to close after more than 35 years providing a home and support to self-help groups

24 April, The Federal Budget restores funding to community legal centres after they waged an intense campaign about the impact of the cuts

29 March, The ACT Government agrees to "find transitional funding and a way forward" for Self Help Organisations United Together

14 June, Productivity Commission releases a study to review the costs of the National Disability Insurance Scheme

14 July, The Australian Government reverses its decision to abolish dedicated volunteer management program funding with \$19.95 million dedicated to Volunteer Management Activity between 1 January 2018 until 30 June 2021

16 August, The NDIA announces that it is accepting applications for ILC National Readiness Grants for Information, Linkages and Referrals. The announcement comes over two years after DSS defunded the specialist disability information program

4 September, The Canberra Times reports that Marymead, one of Canberra's last remaining providers of respite care is closing its doors to people with high needs. Stephen Fox from ACT National Disability Services reports that a number of organisations across the sector are facing similar issues due to unsustainable pricing in the NDIS price guide for respite and other services

~The story continues~

IMAGE CREDITS: Historical images in this timeline reproduced from SMH, PWDA, NAA, DSS, News Ltd, The Conversation and Julia Gillard, by Sophie Deane, Museum of Australian Democracy collection

WE DON'T EVEN HAVE TIME TO TALK ...

"Would love to participate in this project but due to funding cuts received over 4 years, we are so busy that we have limited time to participate in community consultations, training and sector development. Sorry but that's the impact that funding cuts have had on the service, our sole focus is on service delivery"

A long running frontline service working for Canberra women approached for Stories of Transition