

DECEMBER 2018

# Chair Chat

with Prof. David Gilchrist



## 2018: A Year in Review

Following the severe turbulence evident in the disability sector during 2017, this year was somewhat more settled though no less challenging. As outlined in the Chair Chat in December of last year, a Bilateral Agreement was announced by the State Labor Government and the Commonwealth with the intent that the national agency manage the scheme as from 1 July 2018. This has occurred and the progress so far shows:

- About 2,000 of the nearly 8,700 WA-NDIS participants have transferred into the national system. This excruciating process will continue during the whole of 2019.
- Nulsen Disability Services houses located in the North metropolitan region commenced the transfer process in October 2018 and will involve about 70 of our residents.
- In July 2019, the remaining Nulsen's services will commence the transfer into the National Disability Insurance Scheme and require 130 residents to develop new person centred funding plans. Information sessions will be conducted for all residents and those families who will be affected by this schedule.

During the course of 2018, our staff numbers grew to over 700 employees, of whom approximately 300 are full time and 400 work on a part-time basis. The hours of service delivery increased to over 822,000 hours of support during the year. Over 200 participants received accommodation services and 190 people received a Nulsen Therapy service.

Nulsen Group responded to the challenging external environment by developing a strategic plan, as outlined in the May edition of this article.

As a result we have commenced the provision of services for people with mental health conditions in

### Key Points

- **Nulsen Group continues to grow services and make progress in a challenging external environment.**
- **The development of a well-trained competent workforce will be crucial to the quality of services.**
- **The provision of accessible social housing based on the principles of universal design is essential for all the citizens of this state.**

partnership with another key service provider. We also commenced negotiations with Adventist Care for the provision of services to up to 16 of their residents who live with disabilities. This process will progress over the first three months of the new year and I will provide a more detailed description of this development and the results early next year.

Over the past 12 months Nulsen Group has invested over one million dollars into the implementation process of the national Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). This funding has been directed to the Participant Engagement and Development team, managing the costs of any vacancies, the timely processing of invoices on the national portal along with a number of customer related information technology systems.

Along with a number of disability sector organisations, Nulsen requested the State Labor Government increase its investment to support transfer and the implementation of the national scheme. I am aware that the significant amount of cash available in the state system has doubled over the past six months. As described in the November article, I am also aware that State Labor

Government is prioritising the spending of this cash on its own financial needs, such as payments for staff redundancies and the leave entitlements of coordinator staff who transfer to the Commonwealth agency. This is in preference to funding the needs of people living with disabilities and those organisations that provide the essential direct care services.

I reiterate that unspent cash originally allocated to people with disabilities needs to be reinvested into the participants and the disability sector to support the implementation process and stimulate targeted sector development. Otherwise, the money will be returned to State Treasury and invested in other priorities championed by more assertive ministers who are involved and engaged in their portfolio area.

The ongoing development of a skilled and well-compensated workforce to support people living with complex disabilities is a particular area that requires an immediate response and positive financial stimulus. The recruitment of competent well-trained staff is a highly competitive process within the current environment.

The provision of suitable social housing options is also a key for all the citizens of Western Australia. This is a key area the amalgamation of the Disability Services Commission with the Department of Housing was intended to address,

with surprisingly little action, no budget allocation and no discernible outcomes over the past 18 months. We await positive government action with eager anticipation.

In January's edition, I will focus more on the future known directions and pathways that are likely to emerge during 2019.



**Professor David Gilchrist** BA BBus PhD FCA FAIC 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 at the University of Western Australia as well as the Public Sector Accounting and Disclosure Research Cluster. 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. Achievements include: working as the Assistant Auditor General WA, the Associate Dean of the School of Business, University of Notre Dame Australia, Chairman to Nulsen Disability Services, and the Kimberley Individual and Family Support Association. David produced 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.](#)