

# The NDIS for Women with Disabilities

Nearly one in five Victorian women has a disability. As women with disabilities, we are amongst the most marginalised and disadvantaged people in the world. The combination of being a woman and having a disability results in multiple levels of discrimination. We are less likely to be educated, employed and well-housed than both women without disabilities and men with disabilities.

This fact sheet on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) has been developed to ensure that you, as a woman with a disability, can better understand and get the most benefit from your NDIS funding package.

“ It’s important you have real choice and control over your package so that it meets your needs now, and in the future. We hope this fact sheet assists you to make sure your Plan meets your needs and to know what to look for in a quality, women-sensitive service.

## About the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

The NDIS is run by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA). The NDIS supports people with a permanent and significant disability that affects their ability to take part in everyday activities. People accessing the NDIS are called “participants”.

Under the NDIS you have the right to decide

- What your goals are. E.g. Goals about your education and employment, health and wellbeing, and/or being active in your local community and the wider community.
- What support you need to undertake everyday activities to meet your goals.
- How your support is delivered to you and who delivers it.



## Are you eligible?

To be eligible to be a participant in Victoria you need to:

- Live in an eligible region <http://www.ndis.gov.au/about-us/our-trial-sites/ndis-victoria>
- Have a permanent and significant disability affecting you taking part in everyday activities
- Be aged less than 65 when you first access the scheme
- Be an Australian citizen, a permanent resident or a New Zealand citizen who holds a Protected Special Category Visa

You can check whether you meet the NDIS access requirements <http://www.ndis.gov.au/ndis-access-checklist>

The full scheme will roll out between 2016–2019.

When the scheme becomes available in your area, you should contact the local agency directly or via your current service provider.

## Do I need an NDIS assessment?

Everyone applying must have a one-off assessment for eligibility.

## What if I disagree with the assessment?

If you disagree with a decision made by the NDIA, you can apply to have the decision reviewed through the NDIA's internal review. If you are still not satisfied after the internal review, you can apply to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT). For more information go to <http://www.aat.gov.au/ApplyingForAReview/NDIS.htm>. You may want to ask a support person or disability advocate to assist you with this appeal.

## Planning and making the NDIS work for you

Once you have been assessed as eligible, you will be allocated a Planner and Local Area Coordinator (LAC). A Planner will work with you to develop your Plan. Your Plan should be flexible and focus on you. It will focus on “reasonable and necessary supports” to meet your goals. This may take more than one meeting. Your Plan will include a monitoring and review timetable to take into account any future changes in your needs and circumstances.

## Who should you have with you?

You have the right to choose who you want or don't want to be at your planning meeting. You can meet the Planner on your own or ask someone you trust to be with you. No one can be there without your consent. The NDIS must ensure your individual choices are met.

“ (It's) good to have someone with you as a backup, they can pick up different pieces of information and keep you on track.

Your Plan should allow you to choose which service provider you use. Go to the Checklist on pages 7 and 8 for questions you should ask service providers so that you know they provide women-sensitive services. It is important to ensure your safety and well-being.

### **What is a Local Area Coordinator?**

Local Area Coordinators (LAC's) work in the local community to ensure services are accessible and inclusive. Your LAC can link you to services that meet your needs, for example, neighbourhood houses, support groups, health services and local women's groups.

“ The LAC is one of the most vital contacts you will have within the NDIA as they can link you to important services and community programs for women – ensure they understand your needs.

You can request to change your Planner, LAC or Plan at any time by contacting the NDIA Phone: 1800 800 110 Email: [enquiries@ndis.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@ndis.gov.au)

### **Managing your Plan and Funding**

There are various ways your Plan can be managed:

- Managing your funding yourself. You will be given funds from the NDIS to pay the people and organisations providing the support
- Nominating another person to manage your funding. This is called a 'Plan nominee'
- Using a registered Plan management provider. Your Planner can help you find one
- Asking the NDIA to manage your funding for you, or
- A combination of any of the above.

### **Information Linkages and Capacity Building**

The Information Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) builds the capacity of the community, people with a disability, families and carers. It will assist women with disabilities who might only need support some of the time and are not eligible for NDIS funding.

Services that are funded for the general community are not included as part of your package, but the NDIS funds can enable you to access them. For example, your child/ren's childcare would not be funded, but if, because of your disability, you need support to get your child/ren to childcare, this support would be funded.

### **Accessing Family Services**

Your parenting role needs to be acknowledged in your Plan, and you may want access to maternal and child health services, playgroups and childcare etc. Supports provided by the NDIS should strengthen your role as a mother. Speak to your Planner about your needs and the support you need to care for your children.

### **Accessing Health Services for Women**

You have the right to make decisions about your health care and have access to programs such as sexual health. Your choices can be included in your Plan. If the health program is not accessible you should let your LAC know so they can work with that service or find a service that meets your needs.

## Accessing Family Violence Services

For women with disabilities it is important to know where to go for help, if you think you are not safe in your family or intimate relationship. Violence can include emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual assault, controlling behaviour, controlling money or withholding medication or disability equipment or aids.

If any of the above is happening to you, contact someone you trust or one of the services listed below immediately for support and information

- **Emergency:** Victoria Police 000
- **Local family violence outreach services** offer support for safety at home or when planning to leave a violent relationship  
Website: <http://www.dvrcv.org.au/prevention/referrals>
- **Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service** is the statewide contact for immediate referral because of a family violence crisis:  
Phone: 1800 015 188 (24 hours)  
Email: [wdvcs@wdvcs.org.au](mailto:wdvcs@wdvcs.org.au)  
Website: <http://www.wdvcs.org.au>
- If you have experienced sexual assault contact the **Sexual Assault Crisis Line** (24 hour)  
Phone: 1800 806 292  
Email: [ahcasa@thewomens.org.au](mailto:ahcasa@thewomens.org.au)  
Website: <http://www.sacl.com.au>
- Victim support services are provided through the **Department of Justice**  
Website: <http://www.victimsofcrime.vic.gov.au/>

For more information go to [WDV Fact Sheet 3 Violence against women with disabilities](#).

## The NDIS and Quality and Safeguards

“ I live by myself... I need to know that when people come into my house, that myself and my stuff are safe. New providers will all need to be police checked so that we know the kind of people that are coming into our houses.<sup>1</sup>”

It is important to ensure that the supports you receive are provided in the way you want and keep you safe. This should still allow you to take risks but not expose you to harm, abuse, neglect or exploitation. You have the right to

- Be listened to
- Have accessible information
- Have supports that respect your dignity as a woman and your privacy
- Have supports that do what was agreed to in your Plan
- Choice about who provides the support (e.g. you may want to have a female worker)

## Choosing the right Service Provider

“ The NDIS Act says that any service provider supporting you under the scheme has to help you meet your goals, it has to be good value for money, and it has to be consistent with good practice. There are other laws it must comply with, too, such as Occupational Health and Safety. It must employ staff that are competent and trained to do their job properly. <http://ndisrights.org.au/fact-sheet/dealing-with-service-providers/>”

<sup>1</sup> Suni – Women with Disabilities Victoria: Inquiry into NDIS Quality Safeguards Framework: Submission to DSS on behalf of the Disability Reform Council, May 2015

It is important to have access to information about service providers. You need to carefully look at what the service provides and how it does this.

“ It’s important to know what level of training people have received from their employees. If something goes wrong do they have first aid skills? Do they have the training they need to come into your home?<sup>2</sup>

### What happens if I am unhappy with my service provider?

Sometimes the service you expected is not the one you receive. E.g. You ask for a female support worker and a male support worker arrives. If this happens you should contact the service provider immediately and ask them to resolve the situation. If you aren’t satisfied with the result you should also inform your Planner.

It is O.K. to complain and change your service or support person.

### Who is responsible for safeguards and quality assurance?

A nationally consistent Quality and Safeguards framework is still being developed. During the trial period, the NDIS is using existing arrangements for quality and safeguard mechanisms, such as the Disability Services Commissioner and Office of the Public Advocate. Talk with your Planner and service provider if you need to use these mechanisms.

### Need to know more about the NDIS?

Providing accessible information for all NDIS users is important. There are a number of ways to find out more about the NDIS.

Visit the NDIS website: <http://www.ndis.gov.au/>

Email: Go to <http://www.ndis.gov.au/form/contact-form>

Phone: 1800 800 110

If you have a hearing or speech impairment:

- Speak and Listen (*National Relay Service*): **1800 555 727** ask for **1800 800 110**
- **TTY: 1800 555 677** then ask for **1800 800 110**
- If you are a non-English speaker **TIS: 131 450**

Resources are also available from the NDIS website in easy English, and in some community languages. To find out more go to the NDIS website: <http://www.ndis.gov.au/>

<sup>2</sup> Rose – Women with Disabilities Victoria: Inquiry into NDIS Quality Safeguards Framework: Submission to DSS on behalf of the Disability Reform Council, May 2015



**The NDIS is still being trialled. WDV will keep you informed and update our fact sheet as the NDIS changes.**

## Ingrid's Story

**Ingrid's story shows the importance of keeping a balance so that each person feels equal within their relationships. It shows NDIS's role in respecting a woman's right to determine how that equality is maintained. Ingrid cares for her husband as he cares for her. Without each being able to contribute to the relationship, the imbalance of power could occur and become a problem. Ingrid also recognises the importance of receiving support in her role caring for her mother.**

I have cerebral palsy and am an NDIS participant in Geelong. I live with my husband and we have an organic garden. Having organic food is a priority for me. As well as the health, well-being and cultural aspect, it means I can be as sustainable as possible.

In my first Plan with the NDIS I asked that meals be prepared for me and my husband. This was initially rejected, but I persisted with my request as my husband has particular food allergies. I went back to my Planner and discussed it again in terms of my goal as a wife. I wanted to provide my husband with healthy food as he provides so much day to day support for me. This goal was added to my Plan, and I am now having nutritious meals prepared for myself and my husband.

As women we are partners, parents and daughters – we are often charged with the responsibility of providing care and we have the right to have support to provide this care whether it is cooking meals, changing nappies or spending time with our parents.

The NDIS has been really great in ensuring I get equipment when I need it and not have to be on a waiting list for years and having to contribute my own money toward the cost of the equipment. However, I am concerned about the lack of housing options.

Before becoming a NDIS participant I had long term support workers. I was able to continue with these workers, which was important to me as they provide me with enduring care and some companionship too – I am very gregarious.

The simple things like going to the toilet and bathing are becoming more of a challenge and I can see I might need more support hours in the future.

I now have two service providers which offers me more flexibility. I use some community access support to visit my 93 year old mother who lives in an aged care facility in Melbourne. This has allowed me to visit her more often which is important to me and takes the pressure off my husband, who dislikes going to Melbourne.

I am concerned that some services like Traveller's Aid in Melbourne that make the whole community more accessible will not be funded and that this will severely limit the success of the NDIS. I am always speaking out about these things but I am concerned for those women who cannot speak up for themselves. They may not get the support they rightfully deserve.

The most important tip I have for other women accessing the NDIS is "to be more assertive and/or get a good advocate".

# NDIS Checklist: Get Ready for the NDIS

Tick when completed

## Familiarise yourself with the NDIS

Register your interest on the NDIS website [www.ndis.gov.au](http://www.ndis.gov.au)

Go to NDIS information sessions. Find out when the NDIS is coming to your area

Learn the NDIS language

Understand the eligibility criteria

Join a peer support group

Join an advocacy group like Women with Disabilities Victoria

When you receive funding from the NDIS, learn how to use the NDIS portal

## Your Plan: exercising 'Choice and Control'

What does a good life mean to you? What are your dreams?

What is a realistic goal for now?

Talk to friends or someone independent about your thoughts and ideas

Learn how to write goals that describe what you want and why you want it.  
E.g. I want to go to a gym to maintain fitness and mobility

Find out what's happening in your community. NDIS Local Area Coordinators can help you connect to the world outside disability services

## Your supports and services: making sure they are right for you

Make a list of all the important people in your life and what they do to support you

Are the services and supports you have now what you want for the future?

You are entitled to have services provided in the way you want. Do you have particular cultural and spiritual preferences and/or sexual preferences?

Think about how you want your support and what qualities, skills and qualifications you want your support workers to have

Find out about other service providers and their reputation

Ask other people if they would recommend the services they use

Understand your funding – how much it is, what it pays for and how it is managed

## Working with your Planner

Meeting somewhere you feel relaxed will help you feel comfortable and help the Planner understand your life

Do you want to have an advocate/supporter with you? Another person you trust can help you to remember and understand all the information

If you are not happy with your Plan make sure you know how you can change it

Ask about how to lodge a complaint and how disputes and complaints are managed

## Selecting women-sensitive service providers

What services do they offer?

Do you like the values the service has?

Are they experienced in the service you want?

What is the cost of the services?

Have their workers received training on issues that concern women with disabilities?

What other training are staff given?

Can they guarantee female support workers on request?

Can services be adapted to suit you?

Can you be involved in choosing/recruiting your staff if you want?

What is their ratio of casual to permanent staff?

How does the service ensure quality of service?

What is their policy on the use of restraints and seclusion?

What checks do they have to ensure that staff are reliable and trustworthy?

What is their policy on touching?

How will they protect your safety and well-being?

What is their policy on how to respond to a woman disclosing abuse?

Is the service registered with the NDIS?

What sort of complaints process does the service provider have?

## Remember

- Trust yourself and your judgment. If it doesn't feel right it probably isn't.
- You have a right to information in a way you can understand.
- You have a right to be treated respectfully and as an equal.
- You have a right to have an advocate.
- You have a right to expect services will give you the support they agreed to provide.
- You can change service providers if you aren't happy.
- It's important to talk to someone you trust if you are unhappy.