



# The NDIS for Women with Disabilities

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is the new support scheme for Australians with disabilities. This fact sheet is to help you, as a woman with disability, better understand the NDIS. It can also help you know what to look for in a quality, woman-sensitive service and where to go if you are not eligible for an NDIS plan.

## What is the National Disability Insurance Scheme?

The NDIS is run by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA). The NDIS is available to assist people with disability to participate in the community, workforce and in everyday life.

The NDIS provides support to eligible people with intellectual, physical, sensory, cognitive and psychosocial disability.

People who access the NDIS and receive an NDIS plan are called participants.

A 'nominee' is a person appointed by the request of a participant, or the NDIA, to act on behalf of, or make decisions on behalf of a participant.

## Choice and control

The NDIS is based on the idea that people with disabilities should be able to choose how they live their life and have access to the support they need. The NDIS is designed to assist you to have more choice and control over the way you live.

It can support you to participate in the community and the workforce.

As an NDIS participant you have the right to:

- Decide what you want to do in your life – what are your goals? This could include goals about your education, employment, health, wellbeing or being involved in your community.
- Speak up about the support you need for everyday activities to meet your goals.
- Decide how your support is provided to you and who provides it.

## Can you access the NDIS?

To be able to access the NDIS you need to:

- Have a 'permanent and significant disability' that affects you taking part in everyday activities.
- Be aged less than 65 when you first access the scheme.
- Live in Australia and be an Australian citizen, a permanent resident, or hold a Protected Special Category Visa.

To find your local office, phone 1800 800 110, email: [enquiries@NDIS.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@NDIS.gov.au) or [visit the NDIS website](#).

## How does the NDIA assess whether I am eligible?

To access the NDIS, you may need to provide information on what your disability is, how long it will last and its impact on your life. This is called “evidence of disability.”

If the evidence about your disability you have provided doesn't help the NDIA to make a decision about your eligibility, they may ask you to provide more information.

Information about the kind of evidence you may be asked to provide can be found on the [NDIS website](#).

## What if you're not eligible for an NDIS plan?

Not all women with disabilities will be eligible for an NDIS plan.

If the NDIA has decided that you are not eligible and you think they are wrong, you can ask the NDIA to review the decision.

Advocacy services can help you. There is more information about this below.

If you are not able to access the NDIS, there are other ways the NDIS can help you. Your Local Area Coordinator (LAC) can help connect you to other community supports and services. There is more information about this under the section 'Local Area Coordination' in this factsheet.

## Local Area Coordinators (LACs)

Your LAC can help you understand and access the NDIS. They can also link you to local services that meet your needs, for example neighborhood houses, support groups, health services and local women's groups.

Local Area Coordinators (LACs) are staff in organisations, which the NDIA call Partners in the Community. They work to connect people with disabilities to activities in their community, support and other government services.

LACs deliver services on behalf of the NDIS. LACs will be your main contact point for the NDIS. In Victoria, the Partners in the Community are currently the Brotherhood of St Laurence, Latrobe Community Health Service and Intereach. To find which Partner in the Community organisation services your area, visit the locations page of the NDIS website: [www.ndis.gov.au/contact/locations](http://www.ndis.gov.au/contact/locations)

## Planning and making the NDIS work for you

If your access to the NDIS is confirmed, you and/or your nominee will be contacted by the NDIA to have a planning conversation.

An NDIS representative will work with you to develop your plan.

You have the right to request a face-to-face planning meeting. This could be at your home or somewhere else you feel comfortable.

You can choose where and how you want to have your meeting. It is important that your planner listens to you and understands your needs. You can ask to change your planner at any time by contacting the NDIA.

Your plan should be flexible and focus on you. It will focus on the “reasonable and necessary supports” you need to meet your goals. This may take more than one meeting.

## What will be in your NDIS plan?

Your NDIS plan will include:

- Your goals – what you want to do in your life.
- Your current supports – the people and the equipment that help you do things in your life now.
- What you want to keep the same.
- What you want to do differently.
- A plan review timetable to think about any future changes in your needs and circumstances.

Your plan will usually be reviewed every 12 months, but if your circumstances or needs change you can talk to the NDIA about having your plan reviewed at any time. It is useful to prepare for your plan review meeting.

Visit the NDIS's [preparing for your plan review page](#) for tips on how to prepare.

## Who should you bring with you to your planning meeting?

You have the right to choose who you want or don't want to be at your planning meeting. This means you have a say if you are not comfortable with your planner. You can ask for a female planner, for example, and you can ask for a different planner if you are not comfortable.

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 follow your wishes about this.

If you are under 18 years old, your parent, guardian or representative will need to sign off on your plan before it goes to the NDIA.

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

## Accessing community services

The NDIS does not generally fund you to use services that are for the whole community. However, the NDIA or your Local Area Coordinator (LAC) can help with information and refer you to other community services. If you need help to access community services, talk to your NDIS planner about including this extra support in your plan.



## Family services

If you are a parent, your parenting role needs to be acknowledged in your plan. You may want access to maternal and child health services, playgroups and childcare.

Supports provided by the NDIS can strengthen your role as a parent. Speak to your planner about your goals and the support you need to care for your children.

## Health services for women

You have the right to make decisions about your health care and have access to services, including sexual health services. Your choices can be included in your plan. If the health program is not accessible, you can get help from an LAC. They can work with that service or find a service that meets your needs.

## Family violence services

The NDIS should support you to get help if you do not feel safe in your home, in your family or intimate relationship. Things that make you feel unsafe could 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.

There is more information about your right to be safe and where to get help in [WDV Fact Sheet 3: Violence against women with disabilities](#).

## Managing your plan and funding

There are various ways your plan can be managed:

- Managing your funding yourself. You will be given funds through the NDIS to pay the people and organisations providing you support. This is called 'self-management'.
- Nominating another person to manage your funding. This person 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.

## Choosing a service provider

In your plan, you can specify which service provider(s) you use. It is important to get independent information about service providers as well as the information they give about themselves. You need to carefully look at what the service provides and how it provides support.

You also have a choice about the workers who support you. It is important to ensure your safety and well-being. The checklist at the end of this factsheet has questions you can ask service providers so that you can assess if they provide woman-sensitive services and the sort of staff that you may want.

“ Because these people are coming into your house, you need to be comfortable with them. ... The person coming into my personal space also needs to be comfortable. ... If the agency won't facilitate that, then they're probably not the agency you want to be with. ... Ask other people what agencies they go with, or who do they recommend. You just can't discount the value of word of mouth.” (Nicole, You Can Ask That, WDV video, 2017)

## Unhappy with your support or NDIS experience?

It is OK to complain if you are unhappy about the NDIS or your support services. It is also your right to change your service or support worker if you are not happy with them.

If you are unhappy with the service you receive, you should contact the service provider and ask them to sort out the situation.

The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission has begun managing quality and safeguards in Victoria for NDIS service providers. If you wish to make a complaint about an NDIS service provider, look at the [NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission's website](#) for the most up to date information about this.

The [Victorian Disability Services Commissioner](#) may also be able to take your complaint or can help you find the right place to go.

If you are unhappy with the service you receive from NDIA staff, you can make a complaint by talking to someone at an NDIA office or you can fill in an [online complaint form](#) on the NDIS website or call 1800 800 110.

If you have a complaint about the NDIA, you can also contact the [Commonwealth Ombudsman](#) who can investigate your complaint.

## What if I want a decision by the NDIA reviewed?

If you disagree with a decision made by the NDIA and wish to have that decision changed, you must first ask the NDIA to review the decision. This means you must request an internal review.

You can apply for an internal review on the [decision review page of the NDIS website](#) or by ringing the NDIA on 1800 800 110.

If you are not happy with the result of the internal review, the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) can review a range of decisions made by the NDIA, including decisions about who is eligible to access the NDIS and supports provided under the NDIS.



However, the AAT cannot review a decision until you have first had an internal review.

Advocates can assist you with the review process. You can find your local advocacy service on the [Department of Social Service's website](#).

### Your right to be safe

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

“ 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.”  
(Suni, WDV Submission, 2015)

### Want to know more about the NDIS?

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

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

Phone: 1800 800 110

If you have a hearing or speech loss:

- 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 plain English, and in other languages. To find out more go to the [NDIS website](#) or the [Disability Loop website](#).

Service providers are also putting on information sessions and planning workshops to help people get ready for the NDIS. They may have information on their websites or provide printed information. You also want to get independent information. Good information is based on evidence about what makes a good service and is free from conflict of interest.

You can also go to information workshops, peer support groups or stay informed by following these accounts on social media:

- [NDIS Twitter](#)
- [NDIS Facebook](#)
- [AFDO Disability Loop](#)
- [WDV Twitter](#)
- [WDV Facebook](#)

### The NDIS is still changing as it is being rolled out across Australia.

WDV will keep you informed and update our fact sheet as the NDIS changes. This factsheet was last updated on July 2019.

## Remember

- Trust yourself and your judgement. If it doesn't feel right, it probably isn't.
- You have a right to information that you can understand.
- You have a right to be treated respectfully and as an equal.
- You have a right to 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 or feel unsafe.

## Issues for women to think about for their NDIS plan

- Are there particular tasks you will need help with as a woman?
- For example, help to go to a Breastscreen appointment?
- Will your support workers need to have particular skills or qualities for you to feel safe and comfortable with them?
- Do you want to keep your plan information private from your family?
- Do you want to make sure your NDIS payments aren't accessed by your family?
- Do you have particular roles that you need support for?
- For example, are you caring for elderly parents or children?



## Ingrid's Story

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



## Familiarise yourself with the NDIS

Tick when completed

Register your interest on the NDIS website – sign up the <a href="#">NDIS newsletter</a>	
Go to independent NDIS information sessions	
Learn the NDIS language	
Understand the NDIS access 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'

Tick when completed

Think about what a good life means to you – what are your dreams or goals?	
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 cooking class to help to build my independence	
Find out what's happening in your community – Local Area Coordinators can help you connect to the world outside disability services	

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

Tick when completed

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 a few different service providers and their reputation	
Ask other people if they would recommend the services they use	

## Working with your NDIS planner

Tick when completed

Understand your funding – how much it is, what it pays for and how it is managed	
Meeting somewhere you feel relaxed will help you feel comfortable and help the NDIS planner understand your life	
Do you want to have an advocate or supporter with you? Another person you trust can help you to remember and understand all the information?	
If you are not happy with your NDIS 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

Tick when completed

What services do they offer?	
What is the cost of the services?	
Are they experienced in the service you want?	
Can services be adapted to suit you?	
Do you like the values the service has?	
Is the service registered with the NDIS?	
Can you be involved in choosing or recruiting your staff, if you want?	
Can they guarantee women support workers on request?	
Have their workers received training on issues that concern women with disabilities?	
What other training are staff given?	
What checks do they have to ensure that staff are reliable and trustworthy?	
How does the service ensure quality of service?	
What is their ratio of casual to permanent staff?	
How will they protect your safety and wellbeing?	
What is their policy on providing safe and respectful intimate care?	
What is their policy on how to respond to a woman disclosing abuse?	
What is their policy on the use of restraints and seclusion?	
What sort of complaints process does the service provider have?	

## Glossary

**Advocate** – a person who can support you to speak up and receive the help you need.

**Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC)** – funding available through the NDIA for community organisations to carry out activities in the community.

**Local Area Coordinator (LAC)** – LACs meet with people, assist with NDIS plans, and help you implement and monitor your NDIS plan and assist with plan reviews. Your LAC is the main point of contact for the NDIS.

**NDIA** – the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) is the Australian Government agency that manages the NDIS.

**NDIS** – the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

**Nominee** – a person appointed by the request of the participant, or the NDIA, to act on behalf of, or make decisions on behalf of a participant.

**Participant** – a person who receives and NDIS package.

## About Women with Disabilities Victoria

Women with Disabilities Victoria is an organisation run by women with disabilities, for women with disabilities. We aim to advance real social and economic inclusion for women with disabilities in Victoria.

For more information, see our [About Women with Disabilities Victoria Factsheet](#), or look at our website: [www.wdv.org.au/](http://www.wdv.org.au/)

Membership is open to both individuals and to organisations who share our aims, and is free for women with disabilities.

<https://www.wdv.org.au/get-involved/membership/>