

Navigating the new NDIS access process:

- Why do people access the NDIS?
- NDIS eligibility criteria
- What changes were implemented in 2023 and why?
- What does the new process look like?
- How to prepare for the access meeting

Presenting:

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Acknowledgement of Country

I would like to begin today by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet today, and pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. I extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples here today.



What is the National Disability Insurance Scheme?

- The National disability insurance scheme (NDIS) provides support to people with disability who meet the eligibility criteria.
- The main role of the scheme is providing individualised funding packages of support to eligible people with a disability. It is NOT means tested.
- The purpose of the scheme is supporting the independence and social and economic participation of people with a disability.
- This is done by providing reasonable and necessary supports for NDIS participants which allow people with disability to exercise choice and control in the pursuit of their goals and the planning and delivery of those supports.
- Supports could include support workers at home and in the community, therapy supports, assistive technology and home or vehicle modifications.



Why people access the NDIS

- The NDIS is an insurance scheme. It doesn't fund everything in a person's life but it is there to provide support to eligible individuals with permanent and significant disabilities.
- It is a scheme that is designed to build a person's independence, social, community and economic participation, improving a person's overall wellbeing.
- Accessing the NDIS opens doors to a range of supports and services tailored to individual needs.



Getting access to the NDIS

- The NDIS access process is designed to assess whether an individual is eligible for support under the NDIS. The goal is to ensure that people who require support to achieve their goals and enhance their independence can receive the necessary funding.
- The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) has recently undergone various changes to streamline and improve the access process for participants. These changes aim to make the journey smoother and more transparent for individuals seeking support.
- This presentation will outline the NDIS access process, compare the old and new procedures, and explain how I can assist individuals throughout this process. We will also look at the next steps following the access meeting.

Access in a nutshell

The NDIS access process is designed to assess whether an individual is eligible for support under the NDIS.

The goal is to ensure that people who require support to achieve their goals and enhance their independence can receive the necessary funding.



Am I eligible?

NDIS stands for National Disability Insurance Scheme. The aim of the NDIS is to make sure that Australians with disability receive the disability support they need. These supports can help you achieve your goals, be part of your community and thrive in a job you love.

To receive the NDIS you generally need to meet the following criteria:

Be between 7 and 65 years old

If you are under the age of 7, there is a different system in place.
If you are over the age of 65, you will not be able to apply to the NDIS. You will likely be directed to access the aged care support system. This is because the NDIS has been designed to work alongside this broader system of support.

Live in Australia and have Australian residency

The NDIS is only available to:

- People who live in Australia
- Australian citizens
- Permanent visa holders
- Protected special category visa holders

Have a disability that is permanent

Your disability will generally need to be permanent to access the NDIS. This means that it is unlikely to ever go away.
Here in Australia the NDIS is designed to work in with other systems of support like the healthcare system.



Things to consider before applying

- It does take a lot of time
- There is often costs involved when it comes to gathering evidence
- It can at times feel very overwhelming
- The currency of reports and language used is extremely important
- Do it comprehensively the first time

NOTE: At times when the above is followed the NDIA may still come back with an access not met decision, however there will be options listed in the decision letter of how to review the decision or reapply.



Firstly, are you eligible?

- Are you aged between 7 and 65?
- Are you Australian citizen, permanent resident or protected special category visa holder?
- Do you live in Australia?
- Do you have a disability caused by permanent impairment?
- Do you need disability specific supports to complete daily life activities?
- Do you need support now to reduce your future need for support?

If you have answered YES to the above questions then it could be worth applying for the scheme.

You can access Fighting Chance's NDIS access checklist [here](#).



The old process -

The old process involved completing an access request form and attaching supporting evidence which was then submitted to the NDIA for the national access team to review and make a decision around eligibility. This is no longer the case and the process is completed internally with an LAC.

I think this can verbal. It's not that important, I think, for people to understand what used it happen



Definitions in the land of NDIS

What is defined as a disability:

- The NDIA *must* be satisfied that a prospective participant has a disability that is attributable to one or more intellectual, cognitive, neurological, sensory or physical impairments or psychiatric conditions.
- For the purposes of becoming a participant in the NDIS the focus of 'disability' is on the reduction or loss of an ability to perform an activity which results from an impairment. The term 'impairment' commonly refers to a loss of, or damage to, a physical, sensory or mental function.



Definitions - permanent & significant disability

- **When is an impairment permanent or likely to be permanent?**
 - The NDIA *must* be satisfied that a prospective participant's impairment/s are, or are likely to be, permanent.
 - The diagnosis and the functional impairment of the disability need to be found to be - and clearly stated through the evidence - that it is permanent or likely to be permanent and there is NO further or future health treatments available that will improve the impact of the persons disability, all options have been explored and exhausted and all outcomes are stable (or will decline/ deteriorate).



Definitions: primary diagnosis

- Primary disability refers to the impairment that impacts your daily functioning the most.
- A person can meet access for more than one disability.
- It is important to note that the NDIA will provide funding **ONLY** for the disability/ies that the person meets access for.
- It is important that the supporting evidence provided must speak to the diagnoses or disabilities that the person is applying for access for, otherwise it can get confusing for the team assessing eligibility to the scheme.



Definitions: Psychosocial Disability

- Psychosocial disability is a term used to describe a disability that may arise from a mental health issue.
- Not everyone who has a mental health condition will have a psychosocial disability, but for people who do, it can be severe, longstanding and impact on their recovery. People with a disability as a result of their mental health condition may qualify for the NDIS.
- So if your mental health condition even after all possible health treatments has been tried and your diagnosis still impacts your daily life, independence, ability to participate in social and community, employment or education opportunities then you may meet the criteria for having what the NDIA call a psychosocial disability.



Definitions: functional impact, functional impairment

You will need evidence that your disability impacts your everyday life in the following areas, including a description of how each area is impacted:

1. mobility/motor skills
2. communication
3. social interaction
4. learning
5. self-care
6. self-management



Definitions: functional impact, functional impairment

- **Mobility:** this means the ability of a person to move around the home to undertake ordinary activities of daily living, getting in and out of bed or a chair, leaving the home, moving about in the community and performing other tasks requiring the use of limbs. Mobility could also be hindered due to psychosocial reasons or side effects from medication (this is more relevant when a person is applying for access due to their psychosocial disability).
- **Communication:** includes being understood in spoken, written or sign language, understanding others and expressing needs and wants by gesture, speech or context appropriate to age;
- **Social interaction:** includes making and keeping friends (or playing with other children), interacting with the community, behaving within limits accepted by others, coping with feelings and emotions in a social context;



Definitions: functional impact, functional impairment

- **Learning:** includes understanding and remembering information, learning new things, practicing and using new skills;
- **Self-care:** means activities related to personal care, hygiene, grooming and feeding oneself, including showering, bathing, dressing, eating, toileting, grooming, caring for own health care needs; or
- **Self-management:** means the cognitive capacity to organise one's life, to plan and make decisions, and to take responsibility for oneself, including completing daily tasks, making decisions, problem solving and managing finances.



The NEW NDIS access process

The NDIA has said that the new process will mean:

- **Simplified documentation:** The requirement for evidence has been refined to make it clearer what information is needed, reducing the burden on applicants.
- **Faster decision making:** There's a focus on speeding up the decision-making process, so applicants know the outcome sooner.
- **Improved communication:** Enhanced communication from the NDIS to keep applicants informed throughout the process.



What is the new process?

1. Call your partner in the community (this can be found on google or [NDIS website](#) by searching your NDIS partner in the community).
2. Book in a Community Connections meeting, they will gather your details either over the phone or by sending you an email with the details to fill out for their system.
3. Prepare for the meeting by gathering the supporting evidence and ID documents.
4. Attend the meeting either online or in person.
5. After the meeting the Local Area Coordinator (LAC) will submit the application and then you will hear via phone or letter or both whether you have met access to the scheme.
6. Once meeting access you will have the first planning meeting where you discuss funding.



What supporting evidence is needed for the meeting?

- Recent and up to date diagnosis letters
- Any reports that build the picture of the functional difficulties you have.
- If psychosocial disability is being requested then the Psychosocial Evidence Form is required and needs to be completed by a GP, psychiatrist, psychologist or social worker.
- Any other information that helps to build the picture as to why NDIS funding is required.
- 100 points of ID



What is considered good evidence?

- Recent
- Completed by a treating health professional who is relevant to your primary disability
- States that the functional impairment as well as the diagnosis is **PERMANENT and LIFELONG**
- Confirms your primary disability
- Confirms the impacts of your disability on the different areas of your life (6 domains)
- Describes previous treatments and outcomes
- Describes future treatment options and expected outcomes of those treatments. (please be aware if you have future treatment options then the NDIA are likely to ask you to wait to apply till after you have seen the results from the treatment options)



Who can provide evidence of your disability?

The treating health professional who provides the evidence of your disability should:

- be the most appropriate person to provide evidence of your primary disability; and
- have treated you for a significant period of time (e.g. at least six months).

Examples of common treating health professionals include:
General Practitioner (GP), Pediatrician, Occupational Therapist, Speech Pathologist (Therapist), Neurologist, Psychologist, Psychiatrist, Physiotherapist



Types of evidence: old > new

- For your Community Connection meeting, you need to provide existing reports, assessments or letters that show the impact of your disability.
- Previously the Access Request Form and Supporting Evidence Form were completed by treating health professionals. With the new process, your partner will now submit the information you provide. However, in the process of gathering evidence, you may see that some professionals still use the NDIS Supporting Evidence Form as a guide.
- The NDIA is still using the NDIS Evidence of Psychosocial Disability Form (for those who are applying for Psychosocial Disability. This needs to be completed by a GP, psychiatrist, psychologist or social worker.)

I have previously recorded a full webinar on evidence for the NDIS - you can access it [here](#).



What other information is needed for your access meeting?

The new process combines the access process and some of what used to be the first planning meeting together.

Knowing this, the LAC will send you an email that requests the information that is in planning booklet 2 which includes:

1. Basic information: name, D.O.B, address, phone number, email, diagnosis
2. Participant statement
3. Goals
4. Informal/ mainstream and community supports
5. What works well
6. What do you need support with
7. What does a typical week look like



Basic information includes

Name

DOB

Diagnosis

Address

Phone number

Email



The participant statement

Answering these questions help to provide the NDIA with the information they are requesting when they are asking for a participant statement:

Living Arrangements:

Who do you live with?

What services are available in your area?

Do you have access to community and mainstream supports in your area?

What type of home do you live in?

Daily Life

Describe your day-to-day life:

What does a typical day look like?

What sort of things do you enjoy doing?

My Strengths

What can you do independently?



NDIS Goals

When the NDIA speak about goals they are referring to NDIS goals. The NDIA when funding supports are guided by the legislation (particularly section 34) and part of that is that the support they are funding relates to the persons NDIS goals.

So although you don't specify the NDIS supports you are requesting in this initial meeting, you need to make sure the goals you identify cover the supports you are requesting in the future.

The best way to do this is to make your NDIS goals broad and SMART.



SMART Goals

SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely. SMART goals help the person focus on what they want to work towards and tracks their progress.

- **Specific:** well defined, clear and easy to understand
- **Measurable:** use specific criteria to measure progress towards the goal
- **Achievable:** possible and able to be met
- **Realistic:** within reach and related to the person
- **Timely:** with a clear timeframe, including a starting date and a target date.

You can find some resources to help you write compelling NDIS goals on Fighting Chance's website [here](#).



Informal, community and mainstream supports

Informal: These are supports that are unpaid it is usually family, friends and neighbours.

Community: These are unpaid supports in the community such as church groups, gardening groups, knitting groups, walking groups or coffee meetup groups.

Mainstream: These are supports that the NDIS do not fund so any health related supports, education or employment. Some examples include: GPs, psychiatrists, centrelink, hospitals, TAFE, university and schools.



Conclusion

The revised NDIS access process is designed to be more streamlined and user-friendly. By preparing thoroughly, providing clear and concise evidence, and understanding the new system, applicants can navigate the process more smoothly.

<https://www.ndis.gov.au/applying-access-ndis>



How I can help: access

My role in assisting with the NDIS access process includes:

Preparation

Speaking to you about the process: I can speak to you and explain the process more comprehensively as well as asking some questions to gain a better understanding of your diagnoses and the functional impact to know what supporting evidence is required.

Phone call to the LAC: I can assist with calling the local area coordinator office and booking in a meeting.

Gathering Evidence: Assisting in collecting all relevant supporting documents, including reports from clinicians, educational assessments, and personal statements that detail how the disability impacts daily life. As well as preparing all the information required for the meeting including goals.

Gathering the evidence: during the process

Supporting Clinicians and Schools: Working closely with all parties involved to ensure their contributions are aligned with the NDIS requirements. This may involve helping them understand what information is most pertinent to the NDIS.

Collating all the information: Organising and compiling the evidence in a coherent manner that clearly makes the case for eligibility.

Attending Meetings: Offering support during meetings with the NDIS, whether these are in person or virtual, to advocate on behalf of the applicant and clarify any information.



How I can help: next steps following access meeting

The next steps following the access meeting are also steps I can help with. After the access meeting, the process moves into several potential phases depending on the outcome:

If Approved:

Plan Development: Working with a planner or Local Area Coordinator to develop an NDIS plan that outlines the funded supports.

Implementation: Assisting in implementing the plan, including finding service providers and starting supports.

If Not Approved:

Review Process: Assisting with the review process if the application is not approved. This includes gathering additional evidence and preparing for a review meeting.

