



# THE NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME AND MENTAL HEALTH

## ACHIEVING YOUR GOALS

This information has been prepared to explain the new National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). It has been produced by the Mental Health Council of Australia (MHCA), in partnership with the National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum (NMHCCF).

This is one of several resources on the NDIS we have produced for mental health consumers, their families and carers. Others include:

- The National Disability Insurance Scheme and mental health: Introducing the National Disability Insurance Scheme
- The National Disability Insurance Scheme and mental health: Am I eligible for support?
- The National Disability Insurance Scheme and mental health: What services can I choose?

A SUPPORT PLAN IS ALL ABOUT HELPING A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY TO ACHIEVE HIS OR HER LIFE GOALS

### WHAT IS THE NDIS?

The NDIS aims to deliver better support for people with a disability. It is administered by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA). The scheme is government-funded and its services are free. The scheme offers exciting new opportunities for people who are eligible for NDIS services, including people with a psychosocial (or psychiatric) disability.

The NDIS will offer basic information and referral for all people with a psychosocial disability. But for some people with a psychosocial disability, the NDIS will also offer a much higher level of assistance in the form of a **personal support plan**. Not all people with a psychosocial disability will be eligible for this level of assistance. If you would like to know more about who might be eligible please see our resource: *The National Disability Insurance Scheme and mental health – Am I eligible for support?*

In summary, to be eligible for a personal support plan under the NDIS you must be aged under 65 when you apply and be an Australian citizen, permanent resident or the holder of a special visa. You must also have a significant disability that impacts on your life in a big way, and that disability must be permanent.

### WHAT'S A PERSONAL SUPPORT PLAN?

A support plan is all about helping a person with a disability to achieve his or her life goals. Life goals are people's hopes and plans for the future. Identifying their goals helps people to think about what supports they might need to assist them to live as they choose and as independently as possible. The NDIS aims to assist each person with a disability to obtain these supports.

Each person's goals will be different. A person may want more independence, to find a job, to be more financially secure, to have more involvement in the community, to travel to appointments independently or to make friends more easily.

A personal support plan will describe how different people and service providers will work together to help achieve these goals.

The plan will outline the different forms of assistance the person will receive and who will provide those supports.



The NDIA will make sure that each person's plan:

- Is tailored with the person's goals in mind
- Aims to help the person live independently and participate in the community
- Connects the person with appropriate supports from the most suitable service providers
- Supports the role of that person's carer, as well as all the other family and informal supports that are important to the person
- Takes a long-term view and considers what the person may need over the course of his or her life
- Includes an agreement about when to review the plan.

A person may change his or her goals over time, and support plans can be updated from time to time to bring them into line with new goals.

Even though personal support plans are available only for people with a **permanent** disability, they can still be aimed at helping the person reduce or recover from that disability. For example, a plan might assist you to manage your life more easily and avoid the things that cause you to become unwell. It might identify:

- Specific things that cause you to become less well – e.g. stress or social isolation
- What has worked previously to prevent or assist in this situation – e.g. having a network of peers that you trust
- Supports that might be useful at these times – e.g. having someone to talk to.

Once the personal support plan has been finalised, the NDIA would fund any services identified in the plan.

## WHO WOULD CONTROL MY PERSONAL SUPPORT PLAN?

You would.

The NDIA is keen to make sure that each person has control over his or her plan. When you talk with NDIA staff about your plan, you will discuss your goals, your strengths and abilities, any support needs you may have and the best ways to meet these needs. The NDIA encourages choice, so you will be encouraged to consider a range of different service providers and asked which ones you prefer. You may decide to get services from several different providers.

You don't have to change your current arrangements. If you like the way your supports are currently working – and you like the people and organisations involved – then you can keep these arrangements in place for the time being. But the NDIA may offer more funding than is currently available, so new opportunities for support may well be possible.

## HOW WILL A PERSONAL SUPPORT PLAN TAKE MY PREFERENCES INTO ACCOUNT?

The NDIA says that **support plans have to be person-centred**. This means that each plan must be designed around the person the plan is supposed to help. The plan is not about the National Disability Insurance Agency or the government or service providers.

A person-centred support plan will:

- Let you set your own goals and take a positive approach to achieving these
- Treat you as an individual based on your specific needs
- Acknowledge what is working for you at present and what you feel you are missing in your life
- Give you a choice of supports and recognise your need for services that are flexible and adaptable
- Give you a choice of service providers and recognise that the relationship between you and each service provider will be important to the success of your plan
- Provide you with all the information you need and give you the support you need to make decisions
- Outline who will assist you, what they will do, how they will do it and when
- Set a date for reviewing the plan and reflecting on how useful it has been.

## CAN I GET HELP MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT MY PERSONAL SUPPORT PLAN?

Yes.

The law that set up the NDIA makes it very clear: decisions about a person with a disability are to be made to the fullest extent possible by that person. But making decisions can be difficult and some people with a disability may need support to make the best choices.

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The NDIS can help by:

- Supporting you to involve your carer or family in decision-making. If this is what you want, then the NDIA will help arrange this.
- Providing funding for a social worker, a mental health worker or an advocate to help you make your own decisions.

The NDIS will respect the role others play in helping you make decisions but the final say will almost always be yours.

In exceptional circumstances the NDIA might decide that a person with a disability is not capable of making decisions, even with support. In such cases the NDIA might appoint a **nominee** to make decisions on the person's behalf. This nominee might be the person's carer or someone else. Whoever is appointed, the nominee must still involve the person with a disability in decision-making to the maximum extent possible and help them become better able to make their own decisions.

### WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT CAN I GET?

The NDIS is very new so some things are still being sorted out. But it is clear that the NDIS will be able to provide lots of different supports for people who are eligible for assistance. These include help with:

- Planning and decision-making (e.g. a social worker to help you plan how to set up your own home)
- Help with household tasks (e.g. help with cooking meals or cleaning or whatever else you might need to help you live independently)
- Support building social relationships (e.g. help finding and participating in a film club or going to a concert)
- Financial management (e.g. help from a financial counsellor so that you can manage your money better)
- Tenancy management (e.g. an advocate to help you manage a dispute with your landlord)
- Recreation (e.g. transport to and from a sporting event)
- Making medical appointments, transport to and from appointments, and support with medical decision-making.

If you can think of another form of support that would assist you to achieve your goals, NDIA staff would be happy to discuss it with you. The NDIS may be able to fund this support.

For more information on this topic see our resource: *The National Disability Insurance Scheme and mental health: What services can I choose?*

### WHO CONTROLS THE MONEY?

The NDIS wants to give as much control as possible to the people receiving support under the scheme. This is a big change from the way things usually work now.

Once agreement has been reached about the sort of supports the person will need and who will provide them, NDIA staff will discuss with them the best way to manage the funding of those supports. There are a couple of options:

- Funds can be given to the person so that he or she can purchase the agreed services directly
- Funds can be held by the NDIA and paid to the service providers as supports are delivered.

In cases where a nominee has been appointed to make decisions for the person, the nominee may be responsible for managing these funds.

### ARE FAMILIES AND CARERS INVOLVED?

Of course.

If a person with a psychosocial disability is eligible for a personal support plan under the NDIS, one aim of the support may be to reduce the person's dependence on his or her family or carers.

Because of this, families and carers should feel able to 'think outside the square' about how they could be better supported in their carer role. If a carer is feeling unable to continue current caring arrangements without more services or support, then these may be available through the NDIS. Carers Australia has produced a useful **fact sheet** [www.carersaustralia.com.au/storage/NDIS%20Carer%20Checklist\\_Final%20for%20website.pdf](http://www.carersaustralia.com.au/storage/NDIS%20Carer%20Checklist_Final%20for%20website.pdf) on how carers can prepare themselves for working with the NDIS.

Because the scheme is so new, some elements of its support for carers are still unclear. For example, it is not clear how the scheme will provide support to carers where they feel they need more support but the people for whom they care are resistant to any changes in current arrangements.



The MHCA will continue to work with the NDIS to ensure that the long-term sustainability of caring roles is considered when putting together personal support plans.

For more information or an update on this you could contact a National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum carer representative from your state or territory. Contact details for the Forum are included below.

## MAKING THE NDIS WORK FOR PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

Everyone has a role in making the NDIS a success. If you have a story you would like to share about your experience with the NDIS, please get in contact with the MHCA. We will protect your confidentiality, but it may help if we can use your stories (without your names) in our efforts to make sure that the NDIS meets the needs of people with mental health issues.

If changes are needed to the NDIS in the interests of people with mental health issues, then the MHCA will work with governments and the NDIA to advocate for those changes.

If you have a story you would like to share, or would like more information on the NDIS, you could contact:

- **The Mental Health Council of Australia** – phone 02 62853100 or visit [www.mhca.org.au](http://www.mhca.org.au)
- **The National Disability Insurance Agency** – phone 1800 800 110 or visit [www.ndis.gov.au](http://www.ndis.gov.au)
- **Carers Australia** – phone 02 61229900 or visit [www.carersaustralia.com.au](http://www.carersaustralia.com.au)
- **National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum** – phone 02 62853100 or email [nmhccf@mhca.org.au](mailto:nmhccf@mhca.org.au)

## ABOUT THE MHCA

The Mental Health Council of Australia (MHCA) is the peak, national non-government organisation representing and promoting the interests of the Australian mental health sector. We're committed to achieving better mental health for all Australians.

The MHCA aims to promote mentally healthy communities, educate Australians on mental health issues, conduct research into mental health issues and reform Australia's mental health system.

## ABOUT THE NMHCCF

The National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum is the combined national voice for consumers and carers participating in the development of mental health policy and sector development in Australia.

Through its membership, the NMHCCF gives mental health consumers and carers the opportunity to meet, form partnerships and be involved in the development and implementation of mental health reform.

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