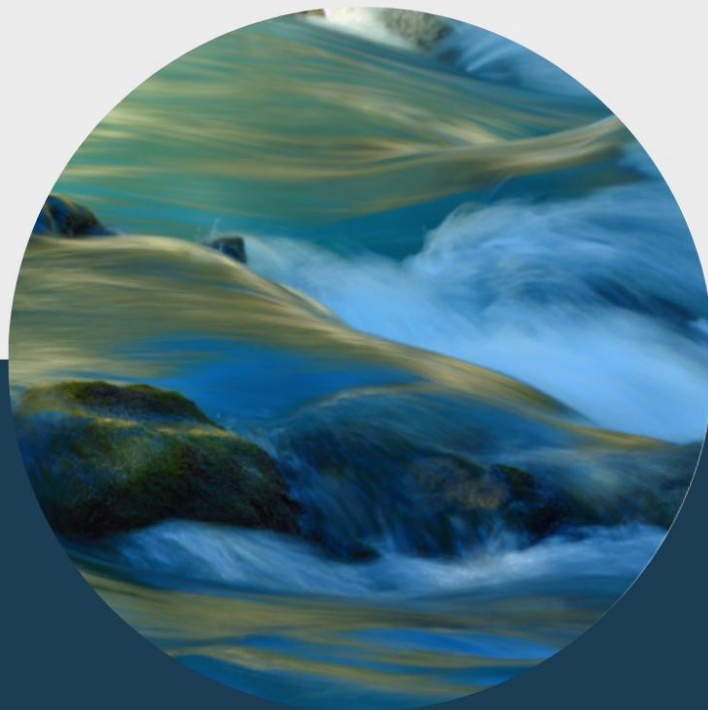


# SUBMISSION TO THE NDIS EVIDENCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Supporting Access to:

- Art Therapy
- Music Therapy

For People with Psychosocial &  
Other Hidden and Invisible Disabilities



# OTSi

[OTSi.net.au](http://OTSi.net.au)

## OTSi Submission to the NDIS Evidence Advisory Committee

19/01/2026

### Introduction

The Occupational Therapy Society for Invisible and Hidden Disabilities (OTSi) welcomes the opportunity to the NDS Evidence Advisory Committee. Occupational Therapists (OTs) are health professionals skilled in assessing how people engage in everyday life activities and identifying supports that enhance participation, safety, and independence. We combine clinical reasoning with practical knowledge of assistive technology (AT), environmental modifications, and therapeutic interventions.

From this perspective, we welcome the opportunity to contribute evidence and lived-practice insights to the EAC's review of:

- Art Therapy
- Music Therapy

Our submission draws on evidence and practice examples provided by OTSi members and the broader community we engage with daily. People with psychosocial and invisible disabilities experience significant challenges with executive functioning, sensory regulation, motivation, cognition, and physical health. These functional limitations often intersect to affect daily living, safety, and participation in home and community life. OTSi supports equitable access to these supports for people with psychosocial disability and other hidden or invisible disabilities, whose functional needs are often complex, fluctuating, and less visible to assessors.

### About OTSI

OTSI is a national society whose purpose is to enable occupational therapists who work alongside people with invisible and hidden disabilities, to reduce barriers to full participation in our world as active citizens of Australia.

Our focus is ensuring access to resources, opportunities, and supports for people with invisible disabilities of all ages, including access to occupational therapy. OTSI has a strong voice in systemic advocacy and policy direction, as well as enabling individuals to build better lives.

## Art Therapy

Art Therapy has an evidence base for supporting functional capacity for people with psychosocial and invisible disabilities.

Art Therapy is a capacity-building therapeutic support, not a recreational art activity. Delivered by appropriately trained art therapists, it offers a structured, non-verbal therapeutic modality that can:

- Reduce psychological barriers to engaging in functional capacity (such as psychological distress)
- Support emotional regulation
- Improve engagement in routines, relationships, and meaningful activities.
- Support the maintenance of capacity

### **Safety:**

Art Therapy is delivered within a therapeutic framework that considers trauma-informed practice, sensory sensitivities, and emotional safety.

### **Suitability:**

Art Therapy is adaptable for participants with complex needs, communication differences, or difficulty engaging in traditional talk-based therapies.

### **Value for Money:**

By supporting sustained functional gains and emotional stability, Art Therapy represents value for money.

### **Experience:**

OTSi members have reported working with NDIS participants who have had positive benefits and outcomes from working with Art Therapists.

### **Recommendations:**

The EAC should affirm Art Therapy as a therapeutic support available to participants with psychosocial and invisible disabilities, informed by allied health assessment, participant-centred goals, and outcome evaluation. Participants need to have choice and control of which allied health professionals they utilise.

## Music Therapy

Music Therapy has an established evidence base demonstrating benefits for functional capacity and participation for people with psychosocial and invisible disabilities, particularly where difficulties with regulation, communication, or engagement impact daily functioning.

Music Therapy is a capacity-building allied health intervention delivered by appropriately qualified music therapists. It is not a recreational music activity. Music Therapy uses structured, goal-directed musical experiences to support functional outcomes and can:

- Support regulation of mood, arousal, and behaviour
- Activate and strengthen cognitive processes such as attention, memory, and thinking
- Develop communication skills, social interaction, and relational engagement

- Improve movement, coordination, and functional independence
- Increase confidence and community participation
- Support the maintenance of capacity

## **Safety:**

Music Therapy is delivered within a therapeutic framework that incorporates trauma-informed practice, awareness of sensory sensitivities, and emotional safety. Interventions are graded and adapted to support nervous system regulation and avoid sensory overload.

## **Suitability:**

Music Therapy is adaptable for participants with complex needs, communication differences, or difficulty engaging in traditional talk-based therapies. The non-verbal and rhythmic components of Music Therapy can increase accessibility and engagement for a wide range of participants.

## **Value for money:**

By supporting sustained improvements in regulation, engagement, and functional participation, Music Therapy contributes to longer-term capacity building and reduced reliance on crisis-driven supports, representing value for money.

## **Experience:**

OTSi members have reported working with NDIS participants who have experienced positive outcomes from Music Therapy, particularly in areas of emotional regulation, communication, and social participation.

## **Recommendations:**

The EAC should affirm Music Therapy as a therapeutic support available to participants with psychosocial and invisible disabilities. Access should be informed by allied health assessment, participant-centred goals, and outcome evaluation, with participant choice and control over allied health professionals maintained.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The Evidence Advisory Committee is requested to:

1. Endorse Art Therapy as an evidence-informed, capacity-building therapeutic support within the NDIS.
2. Endorse Music Therapy as an evidence-informed, capacity-building therapeutic support within the NDIS.
3. Confirm participant choice and control in accessing Art Therapy and Music Therapy, where these supports are identified as appropriate through allied health assessment and linked to participant goals.
4. Support targeted investment in research to strengthen the evidence base for art and Music Therapy outcomes for NDIS participants, including functional capacity, participation, and psychosocial wellbeing.
5. Endorse the systematic collection and analysis of outcome data, including changes in paid support intensity, hospital admissions, and critical incidents, to inform future value-for-money and effectiveness assessments.
6. Ensure art and music therapists are remunerated at rates consistent with comparable allied health professions.



Occupational Therapy Society for Invisible Disability

By endorsing these recommendations, the Evidence Advisory Committee can support the NDIS to invest in evidence-informed, person-centred supports that promote safety, independence, and meaningful participation, while ensuring responsible and sustainable use of Scheme resources.