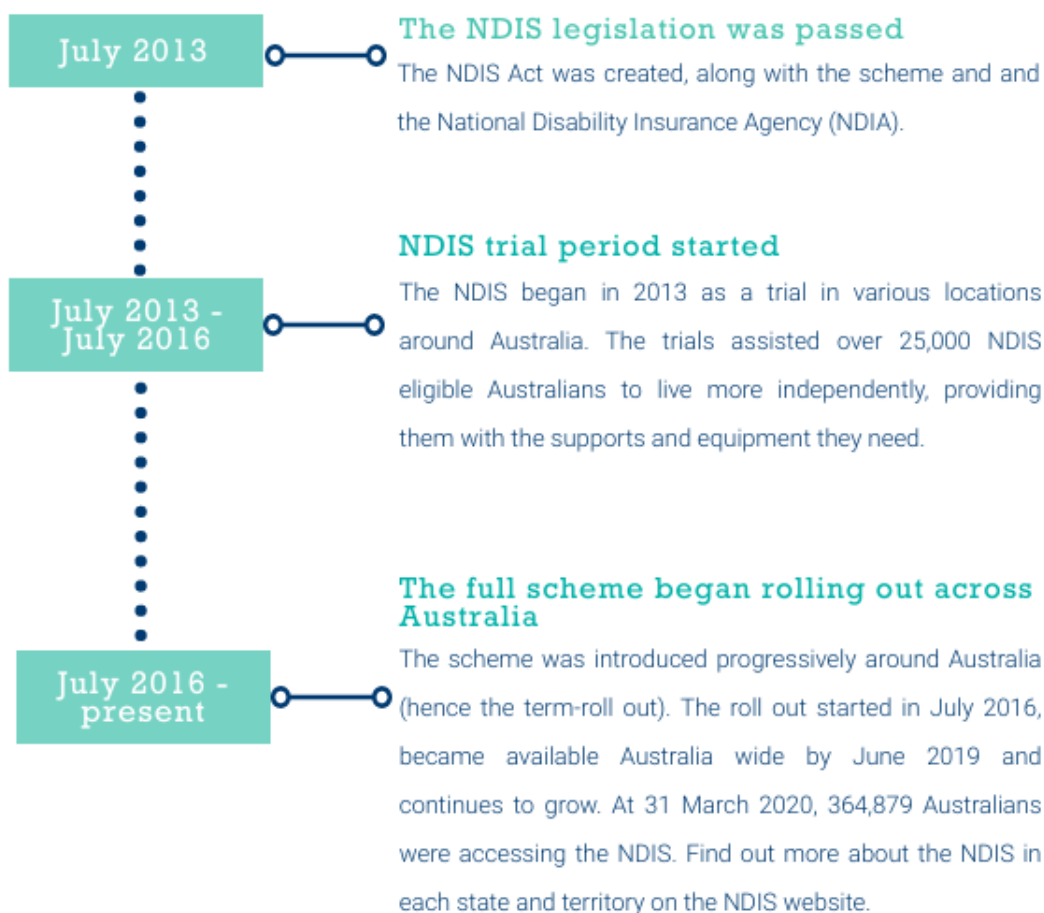# The NDIS explained

The National Disability Insurance Scheme, or NDIS, is changing the way disability services are funded and delivered across Australia. It is available nationally, to support eligible Australians, who have a permanent and significant disability. It is a social insurance scheme that provides individualised funding based on the reasonable and necessary support needs of participants. The NDIS takes a lifetime approach by investing in people early to build capacity over time and improve outcomes later in life.

Background and timeline of events

The NDIS was introduced after the Productivity Commission conducted a public inquiry in 2011. The results highlighted that Australia's existing disability support system didn't work. You can read the full report at the Productivity Commission website. The Council of Australian Governments agreed with the need for a system reform and so began the NDIS.

July 2013

The NDIS legislation was passed

The NDIS Act was created, along with the scheme and and the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA).

July 2013 - July 2016

NDIS trial period started

The NDIS began in 2013 as a trial in various locations around Australia. The trials assisted over 25,000 NDIS eligible Australians to live more independently, providing them with the supports and equipment they need.

July 2016 - present

The full scheme began rolling out across Australia

The scheme was introduced progressively around Australia (hence the term-roll out). The roll out started in July 2016, became available Australia wide by June 2019 and continues to grow. At 31 March 2020, 364,879 Australians were accessing the NDIS. Find out more about the NDIS in each state and territory on the NDIS website.

Psychosocial disability and the NDIS

Stakeholders from across the mental health sector (including carers, consumers, peak bodies, and service providers) were invited to provide feedback as part of the Productivity Commission enquiry. The feedback endorsed the inclusion of people with a psychosocial disability in the scheme. Click here to read the full Productivity Commission report on disability care and support.

In 2014, the National Mental Health Sector Reference Group was formed in order to develop strong working relationships between the mental health sector and the NDIA, to ensure the NDIS best meets the needs of people with a psychosocial disability.

You can find out more about the NDIS and mental health, including a range of mental health specific resources, on the NDIS website.

What does the NDIS aim to do?

The main objective of the NDIS is to provide eligible Australians with the reasonable and necessary supports they need to live an ordinary life. The NDIS also aims to:

- enhance the independence and social and economic participation of people with disability and their carers
- provide people with a disability the choice and control to use their NDIS funding on the supports and services that will help them to meet their goals
- facilitate a nationally consistent approach to disability supports and services
- give people with disability better access to personalised, high quality and innovative supports and services
- raise awareness and knowledge in the community of how to support people with a disability, to create more inclusive communities.

The legislation and people responsible

The National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013 (The NDIS Act) is the legislation underpinning the scheme.

The NDIS Act establishes the scheme, outlines the objectives and principles under which the NDIS will operate and specifies the rules and regulations for participants, service providers, and the NDIA when accessing and implementing the scheme.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme Rules 2018 (The NDIS Rules) are legislative instruments (i.e. laws) also made under the NDIS Act. They support the NDIS Act, providing details in relation to the operation of the NDIS.

The NDIS Act also establishes two independent Commonwealth government agencies:

- The National Disability Insurance Scheme Launch Transition Agency (known as the National Disability Insurance Agency or NDIA)
- The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission.

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)

The NDIA is responsible for implementing the NDIS. The main functions of the NDIA are to:

- deliver the scheme, manage funding, and ensure it is financially sustainable
- raise community awareness and encourage greater inclusion and access for people with a disability to community and mainstream services
- provide information, referrals and links to services and activities
- determine who is eligible for the scheme, develop and monitor individual participant plans.

For more information visit the NDIS website.

The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (the NDIS Commission)

The NDIS Commission improves the quality and safety of NDIS supports and services. The NDIS Commission is separate to, and does not regulate, the NDIA. The main functions of the NDIS Commission are to oversee:

- provider regulation and registration
- compliance with the NDIS practice standards and Code of Conduct
- complaints about NDIS services and supports
- reportable incidents, including abuse and neglect of a participant
- behaviour support and the use of restrictive practices
- nationally consistent NDIS worker screening.

For more information visit the NDIS Commission website. We have also developed an NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission factsheet.

How does the NDIS support individuals and the community?

A key principle of the NDIS is that people with a disability have the same rights as all Australians to access community and mainstream services, to determine their best interests, and exercise choice and control in decisions that affect their lives. The NDIS is not designed to duplicate or replace existing mainstream services or community supports.

Community and informal supports are 'unpaid supports' including family, friends and community groups e.g., church. The NDIS aims to sustain and strengthen these existing supports, not to replace them. This is considered in detail when developing a participant's individual NDIS plan.

Mainstream services are government-funded public services that are available to all Australians. These include health services (e.g., Medicare, dental, hospital, mental health) employment services (e.g., Centrelink), housing and more.

The NDIS will work with other government systems as part of the government's overall strategy for improving the response of mainstream services for people with a disability.

The NDIS will achieve its aims and objectives through two different funding activities:

- individual NDIS plans – supports and services for individuals.
- information, linkages and capacity building – activities that ensure communities become more accessible and inclusive of people with disability.

Individual funding plans

If a person is eligible for the NDIS, they become an 'NDIS participant'. Every NDIS participant is supported to develop an NDIS plan (also known as an individual plan), which includes information about the participant, their goals, and the funding they have received. NDIS participants can use this funding to access the supports and services they want, when they want them. This system of individualised funding puts choice and control with the person, not the organisation.

Who is eligible for the NDIS?

A person who wants to become a NDIS participant needs to show that they meet the access requirements set out in section 21 of the NDIS Act.

There are three broad requirements for a person to be eligible for the NDIS:

- **Age:** a person must be under the age of 65 when their request to access the NDIS is made.
- **Residency:** a person must be an Australian citizen, holder of a permanent visa or a protected special category visa.
- **Disability:** a person is likely to meet the disability requirements if they have a disability that is attributable to an impairment, that is permanent or likely to be permanent, and that results in substantially reduced functional capacity.

See our NDIS access and psychosocial disability training module for more information on accessing the NDIS.

What do the NDIS include in individual funding plans?

The NDIS funds reasonable and necessary supports to help a person reach their goals. The NDIS Act details the reasonable and necessary criteria, which are the guiding principles for deciding what can be included in a NDIS plan. The NDIS is an individualised scheme and everyone has different needs and goals, so what is considered reasonable and necessary for one person might not be for another.

See our reasonable and necessary in the NDIS training for more information.

Information, linkages and capacity building (ILC)

ILC is a grants program that aims to build community capacity and ensure the sustainability of the NDIS. ILC grants support people with a disability, their carers and families to become more connected to their communities and available services. They also support communities and services to become more accessible and inclusive. ILC is for people with and without an NDIS plan, and grant activities will not duplicate services that can be purchased through an individual NDIS plan.

ILC provides grants to organisations under four complementary programs:

- National Information Program
- Individual Capacity Building Program
- Economic and Community Participation Program
- Mainstream Capacity Building Program

More information is available on the NDIS community grants page.

NDIS Partners in the Community

NDIS Partners in the Community are also part of the ILC strategy. These partners are community organisations who are appointed by the NDIA to deliver Local Area Coordination Services (LAC) and Early Childhood Early Intervention Services (ECEI).

LAC partners deliver services to people with a disability aged 7 and above. They focus on helping people to understand the NDIS, how to apply and how to use NDIS funding. They can also provide supports to people and carers who don't have NDIS plans, but who require information about other services for disability support (e.g. mainstream). Read more about LACs on the [NDIS website](#).

ECEI partners provide similar support to LACs, but targeted at early childhood intervention for children aged 0-6 years with a developmental delay or disability. You can learn more about early childhood intervention on the [NDIS website](#).

Where to go for more information

This document we have provided you with a broad overview of the NDIS and how it supports people with a disability. To increase your NDIS knowledge, here are some further training modules and resources:

External resources

NDIS website
- [understanding the NDIS](#)
- [mental health and the NDIS](#)
- [LAC partners in the community](#)
- [ECEI partners in the community](#)
- [data insights](#)

[Productivity Commission website](#)
[The NDIS Commission website](#)

Transition Support Project website

Training modules
- [NDIS explained](#)
- [Reasonable and necessary supports in the NDIS](#)
- [NDIS access and psychosocial disability](#)
- [Recovery and the NDIS](#)

Factsheets and articles
- [Recovery and the NDIS factsheet](#)
- [NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission factsheet](#)

Disclaimer: The Transition Support Project believes that the information contained in this publication is correct at the time of publishing (July 2020); however, the Transition Support Project reserves the right to vary any of this publication without further notice. The information provided in this document should not be relied on instead of other legal, medical, financial, or professional advice.