



CIRCLE SC NDIS TOOLKIT

We aim to take the stress out of the NDIS by cutting through complexity and getting results.

Our mission is simple. **To simplify the NDIS.**

We speak NDIS lingo so you don't have to. We've gathered NDIS and Circle SC resources in one place to make the NDIS understandable and accessible for everyone. **This toolkit was developed to support NDIS participants to better navigate the NDIS.**

We also regularly publish new blog articles simplifying the NDIS. Even if you aren't eligible for our services, it's still our mission to help everyone we can. Head on over to our [Resources](#) page to find out more and subscribe to our monthly newsletter through our website www.circlesc.com.au



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WHAT IS THE NDIS?

The **National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)** supports approximately **740,000 Australians** (at time of writing) **living with a disability**. The NDIS aims to enable people living with disabilities the opportunity to live a good fulfilling life, be socially included in the community and participate in the workforce.

The NDIS is based on the concept of individualised (non means-tested) funding. It is not a welfare scheme. The NDIS is a social insurance model where we all contribute to the NDIS by paying taxes to ensure the support is there for those who need it. **Australians living with disabilities accessing NDIS supports are often referred to as 'NDIS participants'.**

Funding is attached to each individual that can only be used to purchase disability supports, it is not a cash payment. This is separate to the Disability Support Pension which is financial assistance received through Services Australia (Centrelink) for people that are unable to work and earn an income as a result of their disability.

The **National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)** is the government agency responsible for implementing the scheme. The NDIA employs/sub-contracts Planners and Local Area Coordinators (LACs) across the country to meet with people with disabilities and their families. Their job is to **create individualised funding plans that are based on that person's life circumstances, goals and impact of their disability** and to ensure they are linked in with the necessary support services.

The NDIS participant then takes this funding and can choose their own service providers out in the NDIS free marketplace. The outcomes of NDIS supports are measured over time and reassessed at the end of each NDIS plan which typically last for 1-2 years.



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THE PRINCIPLES OF THE NDIS

- **Person-centred choice and control;** people living with disabilities are assumed to have capacity to make their own decisions and are able to exercise choice and control over who supports them and how these supports are provided.
- **Capacity building;** as a person receives more NDIS support they become more independent. This means people reduce their reliance on paid supports providing a dual benefit where people become empowered and the government spends less money over time.
- **Social insurance;** the NDIS is a social insurance model. Disability arises socially rather than medically (i.e. it is the way society is set-up to only cater for the majority that disables people rather than the disability itself) and the NDIS provides guaranteed lifelong support to those who need it.
- **Social inclusion and participation in the community.**
- **Economic participation (employment).**
- **Community engagement** (raising the profile of disability in the community to create awareness and change outdated societal attitudes to promote inclusion).

Check out the NDIS website for more information including what type of supports are funded under the NDIS

<https://www.ndis.gov.au/understanding/supports-funded-ndis>



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ACCESS AND ELIGIBILITY

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

To be eligible for the NDIS you generally need to be:

1. an Australian citizen.
2. Under 65 years old (or become eligible for the NDIS while aged under 65).
3. Permanently impacted by your disability across a number of areas in your life.

The NDIS will only support you if you have a **permanent disability that impacts you** across a number of areas of your life such as;

- Self-care (e.g. showering, dressing, eating)
- Accessing the community
- Working and studying
- Forming friendships, relationships and connections
- Maintaining your health and wellbeing (physical and mental)
- Ability to live independently or with others

If you think you might be eligible for the NDIS, you can download an [Access Request Form](#). You may need to work with your GP, allied health professionals, and specialists to provide information relating to your diagnosis and ability to complete different tasks on the Access Request Form (ARF).

Anyone who thinks they are eligible for the NDIS can:

- **phone 1800 800 110** and make a verbal access request, or
- download and complete the ARF on your computer and email it to the NDIA with supporting information, or
- download the ARF on your computer, print it out, and mail it to the NDIA with supporting information, or
- email **NAT@ndis.gov.au** and ask for an ARF to be mailed, or
- contact your local NDIA office and ask for an ARF to be mailed to you.

The ARF is sent to the NDIA Access Team who will decide if you are eligible.



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ACCESS AND ELIGIBILITY

To increase your chances of getting access to the NDIS we recommend:

- Be as detailed and thorough as possible when completing your ARF. Don't leave anything out.
- **Make appointments with your medical professionals** like your GP, specialists and allied health professionals to help you complete the form. The NDIS website has a factsheet on the role that GPs and health professionals have to play in the NDIS and in particular during the access stage. [Role of GPs/health professionals in the NDIS](#)
- **Include additional reports from your medical professionals** to accompany the ARF you send to the NDIA. The more evidence the better.
- When filling in the form make sure to describe the days where you are impacted the most by your disability. Even though this may be difficult for you, it's important that the NDIA have an accurate picture of how your disability impacts your life.
- **Submit your ARF before you turn 65 years old** otherwise you will not be eligible and you will have to seek support through the health and aged care systems.

Remember your ARF needs to specifically contain wording that shows your disability is;

- **Permanent** (will never 'be fixed' and there are no medical solutions available to you)
- **Has a functional impact** (significantly impacts your ability to complete day to day tasks)

Check out the NDIS website for more information on applying to the NDIS
[Applying for the NDIS- Booklet 1](#)



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BENEFITS OF THE NDIS

CAN THE NDIS HELP ME?

If you live with a disability that impacts your ability to do things every day the likely answer is yes!

The NDIS aims to promote the social and economic participation of all Australians living with disabilities. This means supports that help you develop friendships, improve relationships with family, form connections in your community/school or workplace as well as help you work or study.

Remember the NDIS will only support you if you have a permanent disability that impacts you across a number of areas of your life.

If you are eligible for the NDIS they will fund disability-related supports that will help you to achieve your goals. The NDIS Planner or LAC will meet with you and your support network to go through the NDIS process and ask you to share your goals for your life.

The NDIS supports people to achieve their goals so they can live a rich and fulfilling life. The idea behind the NDIS is that NDIS funded supports will help a person to become more independent and as a result in the future they won't need to rely on support as much because they will be able to do more things for themselves and have more connections in the community.



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BENEFITS OF THE NDIS

Some common goals the NDIS can support you with are:

- Becoming more independent.
- Improving your health and fitness.
- Improving social skills.
- Developing friendships.
- Participating in the community.
- Finding and maintaining a job.
- Studying at school, university or TAFE.
- Moving out of home.
- Remaining in your own home.

How the NDIS can help looks different for everyone!

Each person's funding and support will be based on their individual circumstances, needs and goals. Some years a person might receive more support and funding because they have a really big goal like moving out of the family home for the first time or entering the workforce. Other years a person might not have as many ambitious 'stretch' goals because they are really happy with how things are going and that's ok too.

To maximise how the NDIS can help you:

- Be very clear about what you want in your NDIS plan.
- Think about your short-term and long-term goals and tell people about them.
- Be prepared for NDIS plan reassessment meetings. Have your reports and documentation ready from your providers and health professionals.
- Before plan reassessment meetings write down what you need from the NDIS to achieve your goals. That way you will feel less stressed and you can communicate clearly what you need.



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NDIS FUNDING

WHAT WILL THE NDIS FUND?

One of the most common questions about the NDIS is what does the scheme fund and what does it not fund?

NDIS budgets

The NDIS approves '**reasonable and necessary supports.**' Supports that are both reasonable and necessary to provide. Reasonable and necessary supports are unique to each person's disability and each person's circumstances and goals. Funded supports assist you to achieve your goals, build your independence and capacity for social inclusion and employment.

A reasonable and necessary NDIS support;

- 1.is directly related to your disability.
- 2.is not an everyday living cost not related to your disability such as groceries or rent.
- 3.is value for money.
- 4.is effective.
- 5.takes into account other government services, your family, carers, networks and the community.

NDIS funded supports are divided into three budgets;

CORE

CAPACITY BUILDING

CAPITAL

Example; you experience difficulty socialising and build connections with others. The NDIS funds allied health therapy to assist you to develop your social skills which enables you to participate more fully in the community, make friendships and gain meaningful employment. This funded support is directly related to your disability, has been shown to be effective, is the responsibility of the NDIS and is value for money because it helps you to achieve your goals, generate an income and contribute to the local economy.



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NDIS FUNDING

- **What's the difference between the core, capacity building and capital budget?**

1. **Core**; supports that you need to meet your 'core' everyday needs like showering, support with mealtimes, support to access the community and transport.
2. **Capacity building**; supports to build your skills and independence. The aim of these supports is to reduce your reliance on paid support over time as you build your capacity.
3. **Capital**; assistive technology (equipment), home modifications and Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) which are fit-for-purpose homes for people with very high disability support needs.

An NDIS plan could look something like this:

CORE	CAPACITY BUILDING	CAPITAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consumables• Daily Activities• Social & Community Participation• Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improved daily living (therapy)• Support Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assistive technology• SDA

- **What does the NDIS not fund?**

1. supports not related to your disability.
2. everyday living costs like groceries, rent, bills etc.
3. not the cheapest most effective option.
4. supports that are already offered or the responsibility of other government services, your family, cares, networks and the local community. Check out the NDIS website to [understand the NDIS and other government services](#).



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NDIS FUNDING

We've developed a **checklist** to help you to test whether the NDIS may fund a support.

- Related to your disability?
- Not a daily living expense?
- Related to your NDIS goals?
- Helps you participate in the community?
- Helps you study or work?
- The cheapest and best solution?
- Helps you develop your skills and confidence?
- The NDIS is the right system to fund it, not another system like the Health department or Aged Care?

If you ticked 'Yes' to all the above, **your support meets the NDIS criteria!**

Keep in mind, whether the NDIS funds a support or not is always a decision based on your individual needs, circumstances and goals.

You can find **more information about reasonable and necessary supports** on the NDIS website: [Reasonable-and-necessary-supports](#)



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NDIS PLANNING

HOW DO YOU BEST PREPARE FOR YOUR NDIS PLANNING MEETING?

The NDIS planning process is often a stressful experience for all parties involved but particularly for the NDIS participant whose supports are being assessed. The best way to combat this stress and increase the chance of a positive outcome is to be prepared. The more prepared you are the less likely you are to be blindsided by funding cuts.

The NDIS have prepared a **factsheet** to assist you to prepare for your planning meeting: [Getting ready for your NDIS planning conversation](#)

To ensure you have the best experience and outcome possible from your planning meeting:

- **Book a day/time for your planning meeting** when you know you will be able to communicate to the best of your ability e.g. if you are not a morning person don't book for 9am Monday morning!
- **Attend with a support person** (usually spouse or family) and one or two key providers. By inviting your therapist, Support Coordinator or other key person they will be able to share their report in NDIS lingo but by keeping the meeting small you will be able to express your wishes more clearly and there is less danger of your voice being overpowered by the professionals in the room.
- **Be very clear about what you want in your NDIS plan.** Write down what you need from the NDIS to achieve your goals. That way you will feel less stressed and it is crystal clear about what you need.
- **Think about your short-term and long-term goals** and tell people about them.
- **Have your reports and documentation ready** from your providers and health professionals. The NDIA bases a lot of their decisions on written evidenced-based reports that they can reference to justify decisions to management.

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NDIS PLANNING

- When completing reports or assessments **make sure to describe the days where you are impacted the most by your disability**. Even though this may be difficult for you, it's important that the NDIA have an accurate picture of how your disability impacts your life as this will affect their funding decisions.
- Your providers are required to submit their end of plan reports to the NDIA at least **8 weeks prior** to the planning meeting. Follow-up with them to make sure they are organised. Make sure their reports are detailed and thorough and don't leave anything out. If possible, ask to read a copy before your provider sends their report to the NDIA.
- **Hold a plan preparation meeting with your providers** before the NDIS plan meeting so you make sure you have everything you need to present solid evidence.
- **Make sure the LAC or NDIS Planner has the contact details of you and your Support Coordinator/providers** in case they need to clarify anything after the meeting.

The NDIS have developed a resource– [Booklet 2– Creating your NDIS Plan](#) which covers:

- getting ready for your planning conversation
- creating your NDIS plan
- receiving your approved NDIS plan.



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NDIS PLANNING

WHAT IS SUPPORT COORDINATION AND HOW DO YOU GET IT FUNDED IN YOUR NDIS PLAN?

A Support Coordinator helps you to understand and use your plan.

A Support Coordinator can help you to;

- understand your plan.
- support you to achieve your goals.
- choose your providers.
- build your independence and confidence.

A Support Coordinator does not;

- make decisions for you.
- act as an advocate although they can link you in with an independent advocate.

Learn more by watching this short animated Youtube video from the NDIS:
[What is Support Coordination?](#)

There are different types of Support Coordination

1. **Coordination of Supports (level 2)** puts in place a mix of supports to increase your capacity to maintain relationships, manage tasks independently, live more independently and participate in your local community. It aims to build your confidence and skill to self-direct your own life and not just your funded services.
2. **Specialist Support Coordination (level 3)** is a higher level of Support Coordination. It is for people whose situations are more complex and who need specialist support. A Specialist Support Coordinator will assist you to manage challenges in your support environment and ensure consistent delivery of service. This is the support that Circle SC offers.

The NDIS describes each level of Support Coordination on its website:
[Who can help start your plan_Support Coordination](#)



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NDIS PLANNING

How will you know if you are funded for Support Coordination?

Your plan will state if you have funding for Support Coordination in your capacity building budget like in the below example NDIS plan.

CORE	CAPACITY BUILDING	CAPITAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consumables• Daily Activities• Social & Community Participation• Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improved daily living (therapy)• Support Coordination; 60hrs Specialist Support Coordination (level 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assistive technology• SDA

What if you don't have Support Coordination funded in your plan?

You will either have an **LAC** or an **NDIA planner** to contact. If you don't have their contact details call the **NDIS on 1800 800 110** or ask a person in your support network to assist you.

Can you ask for Support Coordination to be funded in your plan?

Yes! Ultimately, whether to fund Support Coordination is the decision of the NDIA (National Disability Insurance Agency) which will be reflected in whether Support Coordination is included in your plan or not.

You can request Support Coordination to be funded by outlining the barriers, challenges and ambitious goals in your life to your support network, LAC or NDIA Planner. You can bring this to their attention during your plan reassessment meeting or by submitting a change of situation form to request a reassessment of your plan.

You can find more information about Support Coordination on the NDIS website

[Starting my NDIS Plan with a Support Coordinator](#)



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NDIS FUND MANAGEMENT

HOW SHOULD YOU MANAGE YOUR NDIS FUNDING?

Ok, so you've got your NDIS plan... now what?

It's often a long process to get an NDIS plan that meets your needs, now is the fun part- using your funding! Using your plan effectively is critical to achieving your goals and getting the support you need.

There are three different ways of using your NDIS funding.

1. **Self-managed**; self-management is when you manage your NDIS funding. It gives you the flexibility and choice to decide what supports you buy to meet your plan goals. You can choose NDIS registered or unregistered providers.
2. **Plan-managed**; when a plan-manager provider supports you to manage your funding. Plan management means you can use NDIS registered and unregistered providers. If you choose to plan-manage your funding the NDIA will pay your plan manager (separately from your other supports) who will pay your providers.
3. **NDIA-managed**; when your plan is managed by the National Disability Insurance Agency. You can only choose NDIS registered providers. These organisations will electronically manage all claims online through the NDIS portal and keep all book-keeping records.

The **myplace portal** is the online NDIS portal where you or your plan nominee can **keep track of your NDIS funding** and monitor how much you have spent and have left. You can make payment requests so you can monitor your funding and pay your providers.

You can find more information on the NDIS website:

[How to use the myplace portal](#)

It's your decision how you would like to manage your funding however in exceptional circumstances the NDIA may include some high-risk supports as NDIA (agency) managed so only NDIS registered organisations can provide this.



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NDIS FUND MANAGEMENT

Each method has its **pros and cons**. We've described these in the table below.

MANAGEMENT TYPE	THE GOOD	THE BAD
<i>Self-management</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-directed. • More control. • Choice of registered and unregistered providers meaning you can choose your own private support staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More paperwork. • Responsible for keeping records and compliance e.g. paying staff super, tax etc. • Have to monitor closely how funds are used. • In charge of hiring and firing your own support staff. • Risk of unregistered staff not being appropriately trained or skilled.
<i>Plan-management</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choice of registered and unregistered providers meaning you can choose your own private support staff. • Plan manager pays your invoices and meets compliance requirements so you don't have to deal with the paperwork. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You have less oversight of your supports and funds than if you self-managed. • Risk of unregistered providers/staff not being appropriately trained or skilled. • Extra person to communicate with. • Plan manager may require your input such as when they are not sure if an invoice should be paid.

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NDIS FUND MANAGEMENT

Each method has its **pros and cons**. We've described these in the table below.

MANAGEMENT TYPE	THE GOOD	THE BAD
Agency (NDIA) management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use of only registered providers means all support staff will have been deemed compliant through an NDIS audit with appropriate safeguards and skills.• No requirement for you to complete paperwork.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use of only registered providers means less flexibility for someone to support you that is not part of an NDIS registered provider.• Less self-direction and oversight on funds as providers can make claims directly online from your NDIS plan.

How you choose to manage your NDIS funding is a personal decision. You may have a person in your community that you would like to support you that is not a registered provider in which case you could explore plan or self-management. You could feel strongly that you would like to be supported by only registered providers that you know have been through an approved audit of their safeguards and skills. You might have the type of personality that likes to be in control and have oversight over your funding which would lend itself to self-management. Or, alternatively the paperwork aspect of self-management might be too much of a burden for you right now meaning you are more suited to plan or NDIA (agency) management.

When making the decision on how to manage your plan, weigh up the pros and cons and consider your personality and how your life will look in the foreseeable future. You can always change your mind if you try one way and it doesn't suit you by completing and completing a [plan variation form](#) or **calling 1800 800 110**.



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CHOOSING A SERVICE PROVIDER

HOW SHOULD YOU CHOOSE YOUR SERVICE PROVIDERS?

This step is one of the most important steps in your NDIS journey. The quality of your providers and the people around you will have a huge effect on whether you are able to achieve your goals or not.

The NDIS have developed a booklet to help you use your NDIS plan and choose your service providers:

[Booklet 3- Using your NDIS Plan](#)

A service provider is a person or company that you choose to support you to achieve your goals. **When picking a provider consider:**

- Values alignment.
- Clear mission and purpose.
- Reputation.
- Integrity.
- Skills and qualifications.
- Experience.
- Location.
- Fees.
- Specialisation.
- Diversity of staff.
- Type of provider; sole trader, NFPs, charities, small businesses, large companies. Smaller providers can mean flexibility, adaptability and innovation. Larger providers can bring security and consistency.
- Emergency and disaster management protocols.
- Pros and cons of a NDIS registered provider vs unregistered provider.



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CHOOSING A SERVICE PROVIDER

HOW SHOULD YOU CHOOSE YOUR SERVICE PROVIDERS?

Registered provider vs. unregistered provider

Registered or unregistered? This is a contentious question for many people. A **provider who is NDIS registered** has been through the NDIS registration process which entails being independently audited by an Approved Quality Auditor against the NDIS Practice Standards in addition to a final suitability assessment by the NDIS Quality & Safeguards Commission. This gives you assurances that the services of the provider meet a high level of quality and safety.

An **unregistered provider** on the other hand has not been through this process. There are different reasons a provider may not get registered such as cost, significant compliance requirements and multiple funding streams (e.g. Medicare, DVAs, NDIS). It really comes down to your needs and preferences whether you choose a registered or unregistered provider. Keep in mind that to use an unregistered provider you must self-manage or plan-manage your NDIS funding. If you choose to NDIA-manage your funding you only have the option of using NDIS registered providers.



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CHOOSING A SERVICE PROVIDER

We've summarised the main differences when choosing between **registered** and **unregistered providers** in the table below.

PROVIDER TYPE	THE GOOD	THE BAD
Registered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adherence to the Code of Conduct and the NDIS Practice Standards including regular compliance audits. • Have been deemed compliant through an independent NDIS audit with appropriate safeguards and skills. • Cannot charge you more than the NDIS Pricing Arrangements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You have a limited choice of supports/providers (only those who have been through NDIS registration). • Being registered may mean more time required to maintain compliance standards and less time for you. • May be less willing to be flexible, adaptive and innovative.
Unregistered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are free to choose any provider in the market. • Not constrained by the NDIS Pricing Arrangements which can mean you can access specialist services at above market rates if you choose. • May have lower overheads as a result of less stringent compliance requirements which can be passed on as lower fees. • Adhere to the NDIS Code of Conduct. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for less qualified services (not always the case). • Can charge above the NDIS Pricing Arrangements. • Potentially higher risk and less safeguards of chosen poorly. • May have poorer emergency and disaster management protocols.



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CHOOSING A SERVICE PROVIDER

You can use the [NDIS Provider Finder](#) to search for NDIS registered service providers and use the filters to sort by location, type of support (registration group) and if they are an active provider or not. Using this tool will show you every provider in your area (which is usually a lot) which can be a bit overwhelming to try and figure out which one to choose! Another downside of the tool is that it will only show NDIS registered providers.

To explore all of your options (registered and unregistered providers) consider:

- Word of mouth.
- Online.
- Referral from another service provider, a health professional or the NDIA.
- Online advertisements.
- Social media.



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PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

HOW DO YOU GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR NDIS FUNDING?

There is a lot spoken about **getting** the most funding possible but there's a second and arguably more important side of the coin and that's maximising your funding to gain the most benefit from it. Yes you can and should request a review of your plan if you feel it does not meet your needs however this is ultimately a decision by the NDIA and the legal system if needed. Focussing on what we can control gives us more time and energy to 'spend' (*'scuse the pun*) on the things that matter.

Here are 5 ways to get the most out of your NDIS funding.

1. Connect with quality providers including a Support Coordinator (if you are funded for Support Coordination).

Do your research to find high quality service providers to provide your core supports (e.g. personal care, community access) and capacity building supports (like your therapy provider and Support Coordinator). Ask around for recommendations and lean on your Support Coordinator or LAC to connect you with providers that are aligned with your values and have a proven track record of supporting people to achieve great outcomes. Cheaper isn't always better. A provider may offer a slightly better rate but if they can't support you to achieve your goals you are not getting good bang for your buck!

2. Limit provider travel.

Provider travel is a big culprit when it comes to eating into your NDIS funding. This is best illustrated through an example. By using a video conferencing tool such as Zoom for regular meetings you can stretch your NDIS funding much further while remaining in your home environment. Let's look at an example to best illustrate this:

Dylan is a NDIS participant who has received funding for Specialist Support Coordination to coordinate and implement their plan. A Specialist Support Coordinator comes to visit Dylan at their home which is 20kms (30min drive) from their office. The meeting duration is 45mins and the Specialist Support Coordinator takes an additional 15mins to complete progress notes/ additional tasks and send these to Dylan via email following the catch-up.

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PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

As a result, a total of 2 billable hours (45mins meeting, 15mins progress notes, 60mins travel i.e., 30mins each way) is charged at the hourly rate of \$190.54 p/hr in addition to 40kms (20kms each way) at 0.97c p/km. The total charged against Dylan's NDIS plan Support Coordination funding is \$419.88.

If Dylan had chosen to use a Virtual Support option and have the meeting via Zoom they would have only been charged for the meeting duration (45mins) and case notes (15mins) at the hourly rate of \$190.54 p/hr. The total charged against Dylan's NDIS plan Support Coordination funding would have been \$190.54 (1 billable hour) saving Dylan \$229.34 which he could use for additional supports.

This difference becomes even more significant over time. If you have regular sessions you may want to consider utilising virtual support options or a combination of face-to-face supports and virtual support.

3. Plan ahead and monitor your fund spend.

When you receive your NDIS plan one of your first actions with your Support Coordinator or LAC should be to identify your priorities. Your NDIS funding isn't your starting point, your goals are. Using a simple SMART goal setting template can enable you to get clear about what is most important to you. This ensures your funds aren't whittled away on low priority tasks. Break down your big goals into smaller steps and habits that you can do on a weekly or daily basis and then allocate funding towards these supports. If you have a 12 month plan then it's important to plan your funding across this timeframe so you don't run out early or not fully use what you have received! If you don't use your funding, the NDIA often sees this as meaning you didn't need the funding in the first place and may cut these supports from your next NDIS plan. Monitoring how much of your funding you have spent and how much is remaining can be translated into hours of support going forward.

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PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

4. Choose value for money supports.

Your NDIS funding is calculated based on certain types of support but that doesn't mean you can't use it flexibly to get the same outcome. It's worth exploring different supports that may give you better value for money such as Counselling (\$156.16 p/hr) vs Psychology (\$234.83 p/hr) or Exercise Physiology (\$166.99 p/hr) vs Physiotherapy (\$224.62 p/hr). Another example is using a Clinical Nurse Consultant (\$151.03 p/hr) to create a disability-related health-care plan and upskilling support workers (\$62.17 p/hr) to implement this with you instead of having to pay the higher nurse rate on a weekly or daily basis. This depends on your needs, goals and it's important to consider any risks involved.

5. Use informal, community and mainstream supports.

Your NDIS plan is based on paid supports and takes into account the support you get from family, the community and other government services. While being conscious of the time and energy of family members and friends, if they are able to support you in an informal way with some of your activities that will free up more funding to direct towards your other ambitious goals. Research what other government services offer. Are there grants or accessibility/inclusion programs available? All government services have a legislative responsibility to make reasonable adjustments to their services to support people living with disabilities. Even if you have NDIS funding they are still required to make adjustments to ensure you can access their services.

6. Self-manage your funding.

Our last tip is not for everyone but it's important to include as we feel it is an underrated way of getting the most out of your NDIS funding. By self-managing your funding you hire and fire your own private support staff and have the choice of using registered and unregistered providers. You have more choice and more flexibility to decide what supports to purchase. It can also be very empowering. The downside is that this empowerment comes with more responsibility and more paperwork. With self-management you can cut out 'the middle man' administrative costs meaning you have more negotiating power with providers. Often you can purchase supports for a cheaper rate meaning you get more hours of support through your NDIS plan. Alternatively you can pay your providers more to ensure their loyalty and great service standards.. The point is it's up to you! If you are concerned about the paperwork and administrative burden of self-management it might be worth exploring some tools and apps that can help to make ease the obligations of self-management.



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FEES

HOW WILL YOUR PROVIDER CHARGE YOU?

It's important to know your rights to make sure your service provider is charging you correctly. Generally, most providers will charge in line with the [NDIS Pricing Arrangements](#) which outlines the price limits. Each type of support has different price limits based on the skills, experience and qualifications required to deliver them. For example, therapeutic supports generally costs more than support with domestic tasks.

However, unregistered providers do not have to adhere to the NDIS Pricing Arrangements so are able to charge above the price limits.

The **NDIS Pricing Arrangements** also outline the price limits on a range of other fees such as travel. It's good practice for service providers to develop and sign a 'Service Agreement' with you when you first engage with them. A service agreement is a written agreement between yourself and the provider which explains who they are, what they do, how much they charge, as well as both of your responsibilities and rights. The agreement is not a legal document but is signed as a symbolic commitment to work together.

Make sure you read closely what is in this agreement in particular the;

- charges
- travel costs
- cancellation policy
- notice period

It's important to know that whether you are being supported by a registered provider or an unregistered provider, anything and everything is a process of negotiation. Charges are not set in stone just because your provider has told you that is their going rate. If they want your business you may be able to negotiate a lower price. Ask your support network, LAC or Support Coordinator to assist with negotiating a fair and reasonable cost for your supports. For example you may be able to ask for a reduction in travel costs if you commit to regular sessions.



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PLAN REVIEW

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOUR PLAN DOES NOT MEET YOUR NEEDS?

Even if you have prepared well for your planning meeting you may receive an NDIS plan that does not meet your disability needs.

Firstly, explore whether there is any way to be creative and use your plan flexibly to support you to achieve your goals as the review process can be difficult, stressful and time consuming. If this is not possible, you will need to request an internal review by the NDIA to reassess your plan. It's important to know that if you request a review all of your supports are up for reassessment so weigh up the pros and cons of proceeding. Your LAC, Support Coordinator and potentially advocate will be able to support you through this process.

More information is available on the NDIS website:

[Requesting an internal review of a decision](#)

You will need to tell the NDIA;

- what decision you were expecting.
- why you think the NDIA should have made a different decision.
- if there is any information you've already given that you'd like reconsidered.
- if you have any new evidence, such as medical or therapy reports.

If you do not receive a positive outcome from the NDIA internal review you can request case conferences and ultimately a hearing with the Administrative Appeal Tribunal. Following this, your last line of appeal is to take the AAT decision for an outcome in Federal Court based on grounds of misapplication of the law itself.



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CIRCLE SPECIALIST COORDINATION

We're here to help.

This guide was developed by Circle Specialist Coordination. **We provide Specialist Support Coordination to people with complex support needs.** For more free resources including blog articles simplifying the NDIS check out our [Resources](#) or [FAQs](#) page on our website www.circlesc.com.au where you can also subscribe to our monthly newsletter.

Our Director Dan runs the 'NDIS Circle' Podcast available on:

[Spotify](#)
[Apple Podcasts](#)

If you like what we are about, you can also connect with Circle on social media:

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If you or anyone you know might benefit from our support:

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