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# NDIS Survival Activity Book

Guides,  
activities  
and more!

## Volume 1: Applying for the NDIS



# Who are we?

## The VMIAC story

The Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council (VMIAC) is the peak body for people with lived experience **mental ill health in Victoria**. As such, staff members employed by VMIAC have experience of **mental ill health**.

Our motto is 'by and for consumers'.



## VMIAC's vision

A world where all mental health consumers stand proud, live a life with choices honoured, rights upheld and these principles embedded in all aspects of society.

# Gratitude

VMIAC would like to extend it's sincerest gratitude to the members of the NDIS Critical Reference Group.

This group informs and evaluates the resources VMIAC's NDIS team. This workbook would not have been possible without their contribution.



Gratitude is also extended to those who contributed their knowledge, experience and expertise in making this workbook. Thank you.

# Purpose of Activity Book

This is **Book 1** in the NDIS Survival Activity Book series!

## **Book 1 – Applying for the NDIS:**

Book 1 is about applying for the NDIS. You will find information and activities about what the NDIS is, how to apply for the NDIS and how to make your application as strong as it can be.



## **Book 2 – Planning for the NDIS:**

Book 2 is about preparing for your planning meeting. This includes information and activities around setting your goals, ways to manage your plan and support coordination.



## **Book 3 – Appealing a decision made by the NDIS:**

Book 3 is about appealing NDIS decisions.

Appeals and reviews are available to participants regarding their plan for a decision made by the NDIS including for supports.



# What is the NDIS?

## National Disability Insurance Scheme

*The NDIS is the new way of providing funding to people with disabilities.* Instead of providing funding to services, the NDIS provides funding to individuals to spend on services. The NDIS call this supports.



This is designed to give people more **choice** and **control** over what supports they use.

# You are a pioneer

The NDIS is still very new. Every person who goes through the NDIS journey is learning and the NDIS is learning from them too.



Before you embark on this journey, it is important to reflect on what you might like to get out of it. What would you like to learn from this book and the NDIS? It's okay not to know yet.

## What's something you hope to learn?

Eg: I want to learn about gathering evidence for the NDIS

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# Meet Elspeth

Elspeth lives with Bipolar Disorder. Before the NDIS, Elspeth was struggling to improve her life and mental health whilst on Centrelink Benefits.

Although Elspeth was hesitant to refer to herself as disabled she found the NDIS really beneficial at helping her to do things that she wouldn't have otherwise been able to do. Some of the activities Elspeth has accessed through the NDIS are yoga, circus and pole dancing. The NDIS has helped Elspeth to get out into the community and improve her own wellbeing.

‘...The NDIS has been exponentially positive and having my dad as nominee has helped immensely. Things like doing creative courses and opportunity to pursue a career as an artist.’

- Elspeth

# Importance of Self-care

The NDIS Journey can be long and tough.  
It is important to look after yourself and reach out to your networks when you need it.

**What are some things that help you to feel better when you are stressed/struggling?**

1.

2.

3.

4.



# The first step

## Your Access Request Form

The Access Request Form is the form you need to fill out to apply for the NDIS. You can pick up an Access Request Form at your local NDIA Office or call the NDIA on **1800 800 110**.



### When will I receive my Access Request Form?

You should receive your Access Request Form within 21 days of your application.

You have 28 days to provide your evidence and submit the form (extensions are an option).

### What's on the Access Request Form?

The Access Request Form will ask questions about your residency, your demographics and your disability. This form must be filled in by a professional.

# Eligibility criteria

## Is the NDIS for you?

Australian citizen/Permanent resident



### **Disability:**

Permanent and Significant\*\*\*



Under 65 years of age at time of application



Living in area of NDIS rollout



# The language of the NDIS

You may have noticed some strange words coming up already. The NDIS is full of words like 'permanent and significant' that may have a meaning to you in English but have a completely different meaning in the NDIS.



Learning about the NDIS can feel like learning a completely new language.

Let's start by defining 'permanent' and 'significant' as these are eligibility criteria for being accepted onto the NDIS.

# Permanent and Significant

## Permanent disability

Disability is with you **for life** and **all available and reasonable treatments** have been tried.

## Significant disability

You have **substantial and severe impairment in at least one of the six functional domains** (self-care, self management, social interaction, communication, learning, mobility:  
(more on this later)

# Who are you?

The NDIS wants to know about your disability.

This often means you have to describe yourself in a negative way. The NDIS wants to know all of the things that you can't do.

But before we get to the things that you struggle with let's talk about who you are.

**Tell me three facts about yourself.**

**Example:** I like to write poetry.

1.

2.

3.

# I AM

We are all many things. We have many elements to our identities.

For instance: I am a daughter. I am a sister. I am a partner. I am an NDIS Educator. I am an Advocate. I am a Blogger. I am a Footballer. I am a friend.

## Who are you?

I am \_\_\_\_\_

I am \_\_\_\_\_

I am \_\_\_\_\_

I am \_\_\_\_\_

I am \_\_\_\_\_

I am \_\_\_\_\_

I am \_\_\_\_\_

I am \_\_\_\_\_

I am \_\_\_\_\_

I am \_\_\_\_\_

# 'Disabled identity'

**The NDIS has changed the language we use to describe ourselves**

Before the NDIS, it wasn't common for people experiencing mental illness to describe ourselves as disabled. The NDIS changed the game.

To get the support we need we must grapple with this idea of being 'disabled'.

It can be useful to remind ourselves that the NDIS is just a framework we are using to get support and we do not need to own the term 'disabled'.



# Is your disability permanent?

A question you will hear in the NDIS Process is **'Is there a remedy?'**.

What this question is actually asking is **'Have you tried all treatment options?'**

You will be expected to provide evidence that you have tried the reasonable and appropriate treatment options for your condition and if you haven't, your treating professional will need to explain why this is.

**Is the treatment option inappropriate? Why?**

**Answer the above questions here:**

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# Is your disability significant?

To determine if your disability is significant the NDIS ask **'Is the disability substantial and severe?'**

You will be expected to provide evidence that you **can not do things without support**. It is not enough, in the eyes of the NDIS, to struggle or find something difficult.

**You must not be able to complete the activity.**

Activities are broken up into six functional domains:

Learning

Self-care

Self-management

Social Interaction

Communication

Mobility

Must demonstrate **substantial and severe disability** in at least one of these domains.

# Learning

Are you able to focus on a task for more than an hour?

How often do you experience extreme difficulty following instructions?

How often do you experience difficulty following conversations?

Can you focus on a task like reading a chapter of a book?

Do you have memory problems that interfere with daily life?

# Self-care

How well do you maintain personal grooming and hygiene?	
How well do you attend to your needs such as taking medication?	
Do you need some support to live independently? <small>eg: family member, friend, support worker.</small>	
Are you unable to live on your own? If so, what supports are in place to allow this?	
How well do you maintain an adequate diet and exercise regime?	

# Self-management

How overwhelmed do you become during daily tasks?	
How much do you struggle to make decisions unaided?	
Are you able to attend to household responsibilities unsupported? <small>ie: pay bills, clean, laundry, shopping</small>	
Are you able to cook for yourself and/or fill in forms?	
Are you able to travel to places (public or private transport) without assistance?	

# Social Interaction

How well do you make and maintain friendships?	
Are you able talk to strangers and/or speak on the phone?	
Are you able to attend social events without support?	
How socially withdrawn or isolated are you?	
How often do you experience aggression and start conflicts?	

# Communication

How well do you follow instructions?

How well do you follow conversations?

Are you able you participate fully in conversations?

How easily can you communicate needs with others?

How well do you read verbal and non-verbal cues?

# Mobility

How do you experience safely getting around your home on your own?	
How difficult is it for you to move your limbs?	

This functional domain is often not considered to apply to people with mental illness/ psychosocial disability by the NDIA.

However it is important to consider if you experience **side effects of your medications such as physical impairment, balance issues and tremors.**

# Where to get evidence from?

**Doctors and Mental Health Clinicians** are preferred by the NDIS i.e. Psychologists and Psychiatrists

**Occupational Therapists** reports are excellent sources of evidence because they write about functioning just like the NDIS is interested in.



You can also get evidence from

**Social/Support Workers.**

You and your carers can also write evidence.



# GOOD evidence

The evidence that you or your professionals write needs to demonstrate that your disability is:

- **Permanent** (likely to be with you for life)
- **There is no remedy** (you have tried all *reasonable* treatment options)
- **You have an impairment in at least 1/6 of the functional domains**  
(Learning, Self-care, Self-management, Social Interaction, Communication, Mobility)



**Share this page with your professionals to ensure you are getting what you need from them.**

# Your worst day

When building your evidence talk about your worst day.

**What can you do? What can't you do?**

**le: Do you cook dinner?**

**Do you shower?**

**Do you pay bills?**

**Morning:**

**Afternoon:**

**Evening:**

**Night:**

# An average day

It can also be helpful to talk about how much you struggle regularly. And how often your worst day is.

**What can you do? What can't you do?**

**Morning:**

**Afternoon:**

**Evening:**

**Night:**

# Impact statement

## Your personal journey

A personal impact statement can be used as evidence to demonstrate your disabilities impact on your life.

**Be assertive and use language such as...**

*My disability makes it so I can't...*

I can't do things like...

My disability makes me miss out on...

My condition is the worst when...

# Impact statement

## My disability impairs my ability to...

[illegible]

# Other evidence

The NDIS responds well to 'hard' events. Things like test results demonstrating your disability can help make your application stronger.

Some tests you should consider asking your doctor for are:

Life Skills Profile 16

Health of the Nation Outcome Scales

World Health Organisation Disability Assessment Schedule (WHODAS 2)



# Acknowledgement

Thinking about the areas our disability makes us struggle can be confronting.

You may be feeling upset, angry, lost or any number of things. And this is **completely understandable**.

*'It can be really confronting a hurtful to read the things my supports need to write so that I can get the ongoing support I need.'*  
- An NDIS participant



# Submitting your ARF

Once you have gathered all of your evidence you can send the evidence and your Access Request Form to the mailing address listed on the form.

You can also submit via email.

**NDIS Participant tip:**

**Take copies of everything before you submit your application.**





# Celebrate!



Submitting your Access Request Form is a huge achievement. Regardless of the outcome, it is important to celebrate all of your hard work.

**What are you going to do to  
reward yourself?**

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# Waiting sucks



Self-care is always important. But it will prove especially important when you are waiting to hear back about your Access Request Form.

**What are some ways you can be kind to yourself?**

i.e. Go for a walk. Talk to a friend.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

# Reflecting on the Outcome

Your Access Request Form is not you!

If your application to the NDIS is denied it does not mean you are a failure or you are any less disabled than you were yesterday.

**Remember your 'I am' statements.**

I am more than my NDIS application.

**Your Access Request form does not determine your worth.**

You are not a success or failure based on whether or not you get accepted.

# What happens next?

## Volume 2 Planning

If you are accepted onto the NDIS, read Volume 2 for tips on how to prepare for your planning meeting.



## Volume 3 Appealing



If you are not accepted by the NDIS or unhappy with a decision made by the NDIS, read Volume 3 for tips on what to do next.