



# WA NDIS: The National Disability Insurance Scheme delivered locally

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## Introduction

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On 2 December 2016 Minister for Disability Services, the Hon Donna Faragher, and Commonwealth Minister for Social Services, the Hon Christian Porter, announced the final stages of negotiation for the roll-out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) in Western Australia based on a locally delivered model.

Since that announcement, good progress has been made between State and Commonwealth officials on the preparation of a final agreement for the full-scheme roll-out across the State. The process to date has been consistent with the steps taken in all other States and Territories.

While the announcement has been well received by the disability sector and the wider community it has raised questions about how the NDIS will be delivered here in Western Australia.

Although the final agreement between the two governments is yet to be signed, the following information explains key elements of the Scheme that are currently being finalised.

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## The NDIS in Western Australia

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- WA NDIS *is* the NDIS. It's the same national Scheme. The WA NDIS delivers the Scheme locally.
- WA NDIS fully reflects the principles and intent of the NDIS as designed in consultation with people with disability, families and carers. West Australians with disability will gain access to all the benefits of the national Scheme with the added benefit of support informed by local knowledge and connections.
- People with disability in WA will not be disadvantaged in any way in comparison with people participating in the Scheme across the country.
- WA actively participates in NDIS policy development with the Commonwealth Government and other States and Territories. WA NDIS policies reflect this close alignment with national policy requirements.
- A State-run model allows the operational policies guiding the Scheme in Western Australia to respond to the local environment.
- All WA NDIS policies are publicly available online. A range of formats and languages can be provided.

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## Design in partnership

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- During the two and a half years of the trials in WA we have learnt a lot about the way that people want the NDIS to operate in our State. But as we move from the trial phase to full-scheme many improvements and refinements will continue to be made.
- Ongoing feedback during the trials and the recent state-wide community engagement conducted by the Ministerial Advisory Council on Disability (MACD) is just the beginning.
- WA is committed to maintaining and building close engagement with people with disability. This process of working in partnership to refine and improve the NDIS in WA will be ongoing as we continue to learn what people in WA want and need from their Scheme. Consultation on key operational policies has already commenced in partnership with WA advocacy organisations.
- The State Government is seeking to include a commitment in the final agreement with the Commonwealth that the NDIS in WA will reflect and be built on the experience of people with disability.
- The State Government is also negotiating to ensure that people with disability are guaranteed a decision making role in all joint governance of the WA NDIS, including at Board level.

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## **Governance of the NDIS in WA**

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- The State is negotiating for the NDIS in WA to be administered by a new State Government entity based on new legislation that will be developed with statewide consultation over the next 18 months.
- The State has already adopted the core principles of the Commonwealth legislation for trial and has committed to continuing this approach into the new legislation.
- The agreement currently being negotiated will include joint governance and reporting arrangements. Both the State and Commonwealth Governments are developing a range of quantitative and qualitative measures to ensure consistent reporting of outcomes to make sure that we can continue to demonstrate positive outcomes for Western Australians, ongoing national consistency and comparability in the decision making on what is reasonable and necessary.

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## **Insurance principles and early intervention**

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- The NDIS in WA will operate on nationally consistent insurance principles, with a strong focus on early intervention across all life stages.
- Individual plans will ensure that appropriate strategies and resources are allocated today to ensure the best outcomes over a lifetime.
- WA NDIS will retain one of the nation's best actuarial firms to independently monitor and report on the application of the insurance approach.

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## **Funding for the NDIS in WA**

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- The agreement between the State and Commonwealth governments will confirm that people in WA will have the same access to funding and supports as anywhere else in the nation.
- The guidelines on what is considered 'reasonable and necessary' support will be consistent with the rest of the nation.
- The funding agreement will separately identify and account for contributions to the different parts of the Scheme. The funding for Local Coordinators, Administration and Information, Linkages and Capacity Building is separate from the funding for package costs.
- Funding for package costs will be provided by the State and Commonwealth on the basis of people entering the Scheme and their reasonable and necessary supports.

- Funding for package costs will be acquitted in arrears, ensuring neither party accrues a large underspend or cash reserves.
- Disability Services Commission (Commission) funding has not been cut in trial areas; in fact more funding has been added in the trial areas.
- If a person taking part in a trial area had previously used services that were funded through block funding, those services are now included in the person's individual plan and funded through the WA NDIS. The supports have continued, but are funded in a different way.
- To ensure that people outside of the trial areas share the benefits, where block funding was provided under pre-NDIS service agreements, the State has ensured that it remains with the service provider to provide services to people who are not yet in a WA NDIS area.
- There are no 'block funded' arrangements in WA NDIS. WA was the first state in the nation to adopt individualised funding.

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## Who will be eligible for the NDIS?

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- The eligibility criteria for the NDIS in WA will be identical to the criteria in every other part of the nation.
- Anyone who has been found eligible for the NDIS through the WA trials or elsewhere in Australia will be automatically eligible.

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## Planning and choice

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- We have heard loud and clear from the community that people value their Local Coordinator as someone who knows them, is located in their community and is a voice independent of service provision.
- WA NDIS will offer a personalised service that does not require people to use 1800 phone number Centrelink-style contact or over-the-phone planning.
- We also recognise that some people want further flexibility and choice. Each person chooses their goals and strategies based on the outcomes they want to achieve in their life, and the service providers who will provide their funded supports.
- People can involve whomever they choose in the planning process. This includes, but is not limited to, services providers, family members, supporters and advocates. If they choose to, a person can develop and submit their own plan. Local Coordinators can be involved as much or as little in planning as the person chooses.
- People can also access external support coordination to assist with managing complex situations and supports. A Local Coordinator will approve the reasonable and necessary supports in the plan in line with nationally agreed

principles, as is the case in the NDIA model where a Planner approves supports.

- For some people, plan reviews are a critical way of responding to changes in their lives or support needs, or for building an important safety net around life events. For others plan reviews can be an interruption or inconvenience. Based on this feedback from people with disability, their supporters and service providers, the WA NDIS will ensure that there is flexibility in the way plan reviews are conducted and timed.

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## **Service coordination**

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- Local Coordinators are available to provide support coordination in WA NDIS and to assist people with disability to plan for their current and future needs.
- Where the coordination of a person's supports is particularly complex, support coordination can be included as a funded strategy in their plan, and he or she can choose a service provider to coordinate those services.
- Episodic coordination can be included in a person's plan at times of major life transition where they need to find and coordinate various different services.
- Choice and control in the selection of providers is an essential component of the WA NDIS. A person can change their service provider without consulting their Local Coordinator, where there is no change to the supports or funding allocated in their approved plan. Where a new service provider will change the supports or funding, a review of the person's plan will be undertaken to ensure all of these changes are captured and the plan remains flexible and appropriate for the person.

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## **Portability**

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- Because this is the national Scheme, a person's plan and funding can move with them anywhere in the country.
- People have already successfully moved between States and trial sites seamlessly and this will continue.

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## **Support in your local area**

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- One of the strong views expressed by people with disability and their families in the recent state-wide community engagement conducted by the Ministerial Advisory Council on Disability (MACD) was for a single point of contact for individuals with disability, their families and carers.

- The engagement process identified that people want a point of contact that is locally based and has local knowledge and connections to the community.
- Local Coordinators have strong connections with mainstream services in the local area including education and health services. These connections provide additional support and assistance to ensure people's holistic needs are considered and that all their supports are working together. This is particularly critical in regional and remote areas of the State.
- Local Coordination originated in WA and has evolved and expanded over the past 25 years to meet the changing needs of people with disability. WA NDIS staff will continue to live and work in local areas throughout the State.
- Local Coordination is a key component of the Scheme nationally and it will be a key component of the WA NDIS.
- If you are currently linked to a Local Coordinator, this will continue as the WA NDIS rolls out.

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## Linking people to services and supports

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- The NDIS in each State and Territory builds on existing local sector and quality and safeguarding processes. This is the case in WA where there are over 175 service providers operating in the WA NDIS whose services are quality assured.
- The State has been participating in the development of a national quality and safeguarding system and the work to develop a new national market. The final agreement with the Commonwealth will confirm the State's commitment to working within the national quality and market systems once they are developed.
- Each person's choice drives the decisions about the service providers they consider and select. Local Coordinators don't determine which service providers may be connected to a plan, but people can get support to navigate the service system and find the right service provider for them.
- People can change service providers at any time and one of the critical areas of model design that the State will investigate is how to make sure this process is as streamlined and simple as possible.

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## The contracting model in the WA NDIS

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- The Commission has a service agreement with providers registered to provide services. Some people call the service agreement a 'contract'.
- The service agreement between the Commission and a service provider details the standard of service they must provide and how payments will be made for the services provided. It does not replace a relationship between the person and the provider. Rather, it ensures quality service provision and safeguarding for the individual.

- A person's plan outlines the providers chosen to provide funded supports to assist them to meet their goals through the strategies as outlined in their plan. The person decides on the extent of their plan information they choose to share with the service providers they have engaged.
- Where someone self-manages their services, the service provider may have a contract with them that identifies the terms and conditions that both parties will abide by, such as how payment will be made, how much notice must be given if services are cancelled.

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## Self-management

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- As the NDIS expands across the State, people will continue to have the option of managing their own support arrangements and will be assisted to do so if they choose.
- The WA NDIS trial sites have the highest rate of self-management in the nation. This demonstrates that people are being supported to exercise choice in their support arrangements.
- Under the WA NDIS, the amount of support does not differ according to plan management type. If a person requires 50 hours of therapy support for example, their plan will reflect this 50 hours. People will not receive a funding amount which they then have to stretch to cover their required hours.
- WA NDIS is currently working in partnership with WA Individualised Services (WAIS) and People With Disabilities WA (PWD WA) to engage people with disability and their families to refine the arrangements for self-managing under WA NDIS to ensure that that they are as flexible and accessible as possible and people are supported as much as possible to self-manage if they choose to.
- The fundamentals of self-management in WA NDIS that will guide arrangements both during transition and full-scheme include the following:
  - WA NDIS does not fix prices for services, regardless of whether a person chooses to manage their own supports or access services from a service provider.
  - People who choose to self-manage their own services will have access to the funds required to purchase the reasonable and necessary supports they have chosen in their plan. In addition, people who choose self-management will also have access to funding to purchase the administration and practical support needed to manage their plans.

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## Access to equipment

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- Nationally the NDIS is reliant on the assistive technology and equipment services of each State and Territory. This is the case in WA. The State has been an active participant of national working groups assessing the future of assistive technology procurement nationally.
- The 'budget holder' concept is not the former Community Aids and Equipment Program. It is an accounting mechanism to demonstrate expenditure of specific WA NDIS funds during trial. People are free to choose who prescribes and arranges their equipment and technology.
- The WA NDIS will continue to ensure that people can access the assistive technology and equipment they need from a provider of their choice.

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## Market stewardship and the approach to pricing

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- Nationally the approach to market is to fix prices which providers must abide by, whether they are sustainable or not. The approach to pricing in WA NDIS will continue to be one which reflects the real cost of delivering services in WA. The WA NDIS will not fix prices and expect providers to respond or fail.
- WA is a very large and diverse State. Ensuring that people can access quality supports and services in even the most remote areas of the State will be a challenge. A WA NDIS will be flexible enough to work with local communities to develop markets and to respond locally to local challenges.
- Over the past two and a half years the number of service providers in WA NDIS has increased from 100 to more than 175 registered providers. This provides people with disability more choice. Service providers registered by the WA NDIS have provided information and evidence to satisfy that they have ability to provide the services they offer and meet National Standards for Disability Services. People with disability, families and carers can have confidence in choosing these services.
- Market development is driven by the demand for choice by people with disability. The WA NDIS utilises a detailed actuarial model to monitor and evaluate what strategies people are choosing in their plans to establish where there may be gaps in service availability. This information informs service and sector development initiatives.



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## Weekend and weekday rates

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- The WA NDIS provides price bands for services, which reflect the current disability market in WA. The bands recognise the amount of support provided by an organisation over a year . This approach allows for an average price to be achieved over a year and allows service providers to flexibly apply rates across different periods of time, week days, week day evenings, Saturdays, Sundays and Public Holidays.
- As occurred during the development of previous pricing frameworks for disability services in WA, the development of the pricing framework that will apply to the WA NDIS will occur in consultation with the sector and people with disability. This framework will continue to be refined over time.

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## Travel

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- Where a service provider is required to travel, the first 15km in an outward and return journey are included within the unit price charged by a service provider. Distances over the first 15km can be charged by the service provider.
- Up to \$1,000 per annum for this kind of travel may be included in a person's WA NDIS plan.
- The Commission is working in partnership with the sector to develop an accessibility/remoteness index to provide additional resources for people accessing the NDIS in regional and remote areas.

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## Sustainability of the scheme in WA

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- The WA community can be confident that the Scheme will be available for coming generations. The WA NDIS is fully funded to meet the needs of every eligible person in WA.
- Because of its tradition of individualised funding and local service delivery, the State has been able to build on its existing depth of knowledge of the number of people likely to be eligible.
- The State has also undertaken extensive analysis of the trials both in WA and nationally to ensure that the NDIS in WA can be rolled out effectively to every eligible person in WA.
- The State is prepared to share any additional costs that may arise from the eligible population being higher than forecast.

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## Appeals

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- The State Government is committed to participating in the national appeals process. The final agreement with the Commonwealth will reflect this commitment to a single, national appeals process.

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## Information, Linkages and Capacity Building

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- Western Australia was actively involved in the development of the Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Framework (ILC) and has committed to its implementation in WA.
- The WA ILC Commissioning Framework will be nationally aligned while also being targeted to deliver what Western Australians are asking for.
- ILC in WA will be implemented from 2017.

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## Interface with the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)

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- The State Government is committed to maximising Scheme investments that are being made in other parts of the nation.
- Western Australia will remain an active participant of national Scheme governance and the final agreement with the Commonwealth will outline to processes and mechanisms to achieve this.
- There is a mutual commitment to data sharing, facilitating portability, and ongoing improvements to the Scheme based on the learnings from the implementation of the NDIS across Australia. The State is a key participant in national NDIS policy design.