A PLAIN ENGLISH GUIDE

Starting with the NDIS in North West Tasmania

A plain English guide for families, and for anyone who has just heard the word NDIS

FROM	Integrity Empowered Living, Ulverstone
VERSION	1.0, November 2026
FOR	Families and anyone new to the NDIS

Thanks for picking this up.

If someone you love has a disability, you may have heard the letters NDIS. Maybe a doctor said them. Maybe a friend did. Now you have questions, and the answers online are long.

This guide is short. We wrote it in plain words, for a kitchen table. Read it in one go, or one page at a time.

We are Integrity Empowered Living. People call us IEL. We are a small, family run NDIS provider based in Ulverstone, on Tasmania's North West Coast. We remember how confusing the first weeks felt, the forms, the titles, the waiting, and we still see it on the faces of families who ring us for the first time. This is the guide we wish someone had handed us.

ONE THING BEFORE YOU START

We are a provider, not the NDIS. Only the NDIS can say who gets in and what a plan holds. Where this guide points you to the NDIS, go there. Their number is **1800 800 110**. Everything here was read from ndis.gov.au, the NDIS Commission and the NDIS law on 2 November 2026. Rules change, so check the website for the latest.

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1. What the NDIS is

NDIS stands for National Disability Insurance Scheme. It is run by the Australian Government through the National Disability Insurance Agency, the NDIA. In five lines:

1 **It gives money to people with a permanent and significant disability.** The NDIS calls this money funding.

2 **The money pays for supports.** A support worker. Therapy. Equipment. Help at home and out in the community.

3 **You choose.** Which supports, and who gives them. You can change your mind.

4 **It connects people too.** Even without funding, the NDIS can point any person with a disability to doctors, groups, clubs and services near them.

5 **The aim is a better life.** More independence. New skills. More time with family and friends.

Who it is for

The NDIS has rules about who can join. The law calls them the access criteria. Here they are in plain words.

- [ ] **Age.** You must be under 65 on the day you apply.
- [ ] **Home.** You must live in Australia, and be an Australian citizen, a permanent resident, or hold a Protected Special Category visa.
- [ ] **Disability.** You have a disability caused by an impairment that is likely to be permanent. It makes daily things a lot harder, like getting around, talking with people, learning, or looking after yourself. And you will likely need NDIS supports for life.
- [ ] **Or early help.** Getting support now is likely to cut your need for support later. A child under 6 with developmental delay can come in this way.

There is more than one way in. You can meet the disability rule, the early intervention rule, or both.

PLEASE READ THIS BIT TWICE

We cannot tell you if you will get in. Nobody can but the NDIA. A provider who promises you funding is not telling the truth. The rules in full are at ndis.gov.au under Applying.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Read the access rules at ndis.gov.au. Or ring the NDIA on 1800 800 110 and ask: could I be eligible? They will not mind. They get that question every day.

2. How to apply

Applying is called making an access request. Here is how it usually goes.

1 **Connect with an NDIS partner.** An NDIS partner is a local organisation the NDIA pays to help people apply and find services. In the North West that is Mission Australia in Devonport (see section 6). Not sure who your partner is? Ring the NDIA on 1800 800 110. You can meet in person, by phone or by video, and you can bring anyone you like.

2 **See your GP or treating health professional.** The NDIA wants recent evidence from someone who knows you well, ideally for 6 months or more. A GP, a paediatrician, a psychologist, an occupational therapist, a speech pathologist. They write about your diagnosis, how it affects daily life, what treatment you have had, and what comes next.

3 **Gather your papers.** Three identity documents that show your name, address, date of birth and a photo. One document that shows when you were born or arrived in Australia. Any reports, assessments and letters about your disability.

4 **Fill in the application.** Your partner can do it with you. Or download the access request form from ndis.gov.au. Section 1 is about you. Section 2 is for your health professional to fill in.

5 **Send it in.** Online through the NDIS service hub. By post to NDIA, GPO Box 700, Canberra ACT 2601. Or hand it to your partner or the Devonport office.

How long does it take?

Usually the NDIA decides within 21 days of getting your complete application, and if they ask for more information they decide within 14 days of getting it. One NDIA page says to allow up to 90 days once everything is in. So: usually weeks, sometimes longer. Ask the NDIA for the current wait when you apply.

If the answer is no, the letter will say why. You can ask for a review. You can also apply again when things change, as many times as you need.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Book a long appointment with your GP. Take this guide. Ask them to write evidence for an NDIS application. It needs to cover your disability and how it affects your daily life.

3. Your first plan

When the NDIA says yes, you become a participant, and the next step is a planning meeting with the NDIA where the two of you build your first plan together. It is a big day. Take a notebook.

A plan is a written document. By law it holds two things. Your statement of goals, which you write: what you want from life, where you live, and who helps you now. And your statement of supports, which the NDIA approves. It sets out the funding, what it is for, how it is managed, and when the plan will be looked at again. Your plan also names your my NDIS contact. That is the person you ring with questions.

The four budgets

Every plan sorts its funding into budgets. The NDIS has four. Most plans do not have all four, because a plan is built around one person.

CORE SUPPORTS

Everyday help. A support worker at home or out in the community. Everyday items like continence products. This money is flexible: you can move it between the core categories.

CAPACITY BUILDING SUPPORTS

Building skills to do more for yourself. Therapy. A support coordinator. Help to find and keep a job. Learning to run your own plan.

CAPITAL SUPPORTS

Big single items. A powered wheelchair. Changes to your home. Specialist housing. This money is stated: it can only buy the item named in your plan, and you may need quotes first.

RECURRING SUPPORTS

Transport money, paid to you on a regular basis if your plan includes it. The amount depends on how much you work, study or get out.

Whatever the budget, the money can only buy supports the NDIS rules allow, and they must be reasonable and necessary for you. That phrase is the test the NDIA uses for everything it funds.

Who holds the money

There are three ways to manage a plan. You can mix them, and you can change your mind later.

1. **Self managed.** You, or your nominee, pay the providers and keep the records. The most freedom, and the most paperwork.
2. **Plan managed.** A registered plan manager pays the bills and keeps the records for you. The NDIA adds money to your plan to pay them, separate from your other supports.
3. **NDIA managed.** The NDIA pays your providers. You may hear it called Agency managed.

Some supports must come from a registered provider. Others can come from a provider who is not registered. Your support coordinator or my NDIS contact can tell you which is which.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Before your planning meeting, write down three goals and the help you already have. Take someone you trust to the meeting. You are allowed to.

4. Who the people are

You will meet a lot of titles in your first year, and half the confusion families tell us about comes from not knowing who does what. Here is each one in a line.

- [ ] **NDIA planner.** Works for the NDIA. Approves your plan, decides the supports and sets the funding.
- [ ] **NDIS partner, also called a local area coordinator or LAC.** A local organisation paid by the NDIA. For people aged 9 to 64. Helps you apply, understand the NDIS and find local services. Does not approve plans. In the North West: Mission Australia.
- [ ] **Early childhood partner.** The same kind of help for a child under 9 with disability, or under 6 with developmental delay. In the North West: Mission Australia.
- [ ] **my NDIS contact.** Your named person once you are in. Might be your partner, or someone at the NDIA. Their name is on your plan.
- [ ] **Support coordinator.** Paid from your plan, if the plan funds one. Helps you use the plan, choose providers, set up service agreements, and change providers if you need to.
- [ ] **Plan manager.** Pays your bills and keeps the records, if your plan is plan managed.
- [ ] **Provider.** A business or person paid from NDIS funding to give you supports. IEL is a provider. A registered provider has been audited against the NDIS Practice Standards.
- [ ] **Support worker.** The person who turns up. Helps with daily life, getting out, and learning new things. Every worker must follow the NDIS Code of Conduct.
- [ ] **Nominee.** Someone who can make NDIS decisions for a participant who cannot, or does not want to. A nominee is not paid.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Turn to the back page. There is a table for your people. Fill in each name and number as you meet them, and you will never hunt for them again.

5. Picking a provider: 7 questions to ask

You choose your providers, you can have more than one, and you can change your mind later without asking anyone's permission. Ask these seven questions of any provider, IEL included. A good provider will be glad you asked.

1 **Are you registered with the NDIS Commission, and what is your registration number?** Registered providers are audited against the NDIS Practice Standards. Some supports can only come from a registered provider. Ours is 4-L7D4Q02.

2 **Who answers the phone, and how fast do you ring back?** You want a name, not a queue. Ask what happens after hours.

3 **How do you handle complaints?** Ask to see the process. By law a registered provider must take a complaint from anyone, even without a name. They must deal with it fairly and quickly, and tell you how to go to the NDIS Commission.

4 **What happens when something goes wrong on a shift?** A registered provider must have an incident system. Serious incidents must be reported to the NDIS Commission, some within 24 hours. Ask how you would be told.

5 **Are your workers checked?** Ask about the NDIS Worker Screening Check. A registered provider must only put cleared workers in roles that carry risk. Ask about first aid and training too.

6 **Can we meet the team first?** A meet and greet before any shift. You should get to say no to a worker who is not a good fit.

7 **What happens if it does not work out?** Ask how you end the service agreement, how much notice is needed, and whether they will help you move to someone else. Your plan is yours. So is the choice.

A SERVICE AGREEMENT

Most providers will ask you to sign a service agreement. It is a plain agreement between you and the provider. It says what supports you get, how, what they cost, how the provider is paid, and what to do when something goes wrong. The NDIS recommends one with every new provider. A provider cannot use it to sign away their duties under the NDIS Code of Conduct or Australian Consumer Law. You do not have to sign on the spot. Take it home.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Take this page to two or three providers. Write their answers next to each question, then compare.

6. Living in North West Tasmania

Distances are real up here, where the nearest NDIS office can be a long drive from home, and the NDIS knows it. Here are the local doors, as the NDIS office finder listed them on 2 November 2026.

NDIS OFFICE, DEVONPORT

167 William Street, Devonport. Monday to Friday, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. Phone 1800 800 110.

MISSION AUSTRALIA, THE NDIS PARTNER FOR THE NORTH WEST

35 Oldaker Street, Devonport. Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm. Phone 03 6420 6850. Mission Australia is both the local area coordination partner and the early childhood partner for our region.

Devonport is about 14 km from Ulverstone and about 40 km from Burnie. The finder showed no other NDIS or partner office within 50 km of either town. Your allocated partner can differ from the nearest office, so ring 1800 800 110 to check. Meetings can happen by phone or video too, so you do not always have to drive.

Travel

Some plans hold transport money, called recurring transport, at one of three levels depending on whether you work, study, or simply want to get out and about more often. Core funding can also pay a support worker to go out with you. Talk about travel when you build your plan. Say the distances out loud.

A community program near you

One example of what a plan can pay for is a group program. Ours is the IEL Day Centre at 47 King Edward Street, Ulverstone.

THE IEL DAY CENTRE

Wednesdays, 10 am to 2 pm, and Thursdays from 19 November 2026. Eight people a day. **The first 4 weeks are free.** Anyone with an NDIS plan is welcome, even if you use another provider. You come with your own support worker, unless an assessment has said yes to you coming on your own. Bring your lunch and a water bottle. Themed days, walks, team games, new friends. To book, ring Nyree on 0437 755 872.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Ring Mission Australia on 03 6420 6850 and ask for a first meeting about the NDIS. If you would rather start with the NDIA, ring 1800 800 110.

7. If something goes wrong

You have the right to be safe, to be treated with respect, and to be heard, and every NDIS provider and worker is bound by a Code of Conduct that says so. If a support is not right, here is the road.

1. **Tell the provider.** Often the quickest fix. Any provider must make it safe for you to raise a concern. They must deal with it quickly, never punish you for speaking up, and help you go to the Commission if you want to.

2. **Go to the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission.** If the provider does not fix it, or you do not feel safe raising it with them, go to the Commission. Ring **1800 035 544**, Monday to Friday 9 am to 5 pm. Or report online at ndiscommission.gov.au. Anyone can report: a participant, a family member, a friend, an advocate. You can stay anonymous. You do not have to go to the provider first.

3. **Problems with the NDIA go to the NDIA.** A plan decision, the amount of funding, a wait time. Ring 1800 800 110, not the Commission.

4. **If someone is in danger right now, ring 000.**

Your right to change provider

Nobody can lock you in. You do not have to sign anything, and you can say no. If a provider is not working for you, your my NDIS contact and your support coordinator can help you find or change providers. A good service agreement says what happens when you disagree or want to stop. Ask about notice before you sign.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Save 1800 035 544 in your phone under NDIS Commission. You may never need it. It is good to have.

8. Plain English words

Fifteen words you will hear, and what they mean.

NDIS
The National Disability Insurance Scheme. Australia's way of funding disability supports.

NDIA
The National Disability Insurance Agency. The government agency that runs the NDIS and decides who gets in.

Participant
A person who has been accepted into the NDIS.

Access request
The application to join the NDIS.

Plan
Your written NDIS document: your goals, your funding, and how it is managed.

Core supports
The budget for everyday help, like a support worker.

Capacity building supports
The budget for building skills, like therapy or a support coordinator.

Capital supports
The budget for big single items, like a wheelchair or home changes.

Reasonable and necessary
The test the NDIA uses for every support it funds. It must be linked to your disability, help your goals, be good value, and not be something family or the community should fairly provide.

Service agreement
A written agreement between you and a provider about what they will do and what it costs.

Registered provider
A provider audited against the NDIS Practice Standards and listed with the NDIS Commission.

NDIS partner (LAC)
A local organisation paid by the NDIA to help you apply and find services. LAC means local area coordinator.

Support coordinator
A person funded in some plans to help you use the plan and pick providers.

Plan manager
A registered business that pays your providers and keeps the records, if your plan is plan managed.

NDIS Commission
The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission. The national watchdog for providers and workers. 1800 035 544.

9. About IEL, and a free 15 minute call

INTEGRITY EMPOWERED LIVING, IN FOUR LINES

We are a registered NDIS provider, number 4-L7D4Q02.

We are family run and based in Ulverstone, and our founders still work on the floor with the people we support.

Ring 1800 370 540 or email operations@integrityempowered.com.au.

Nyree, our Operations Manager, takes calls from new participants and families on 0437 755 872.

Not sure where to start? Have a free 15 minute call

No sales pitch. No pressure. Bring your questions, the ones you were too shy to ask the NDIA, and Nyree will tell you what she knows. If the right next door is not us, she will say so and point you to it. Fifteen minutes is enough to work out your next step, and nobody here watches the clock.

BOOK THE CALL

Ring or text Nyree on **0437 755 872**. Or email **operations@integrityempowered.com.au** with "15 minute call" in the subject line. Tell us a good time to ring you.

My people

Who	Name	Phone
NDIS partner		
my NDIS contact		
Support coordinator		
Plan manager		
Provider		

About this guide. Version 1.0, written 2 November 2026 by Integrity Empowered Living from ndis.gov.au, ndiscommission.gov.au and the NDIS Act 2013. General information, not advice about your situation, and not a promise of eligibility or funding. Prices for NDIS supports are set by the NDIS Pricing Arrangements and Price Limits at ndis.gov.au/providers/pricing-arrangements. The NDIS changes its rules, so check ndis.gov.au for the latest. Integrity Empowered Living, 47 King Edward Street, Ulverstone TAS 7315. ABN 44 283 647 275.