



MY NDIS STORY SO FAR...

The NDIS has been the talk of the town for months and if not, years. While the NDIS is an amazing system designed to give people with a disability the flexibility, choice and control of their lives, there has been many grey areas and unanswered questions. How does it work? How does it affect you and the people around you? What needs to be done to prepare for the rollout? What changes when an NDIS plan is put in place for you? These were the exact questions running through my head in the months leading up to the NDIS rollout on July 1 2016.

I receive services from multiple providers including Just Better Care, Northcott and MDNSW – my biggest question was when the NDIS comes along am I going to still have these services? I think of my support network as the engine in my car – they are the ones who keep me powering through my daily life and do what I love; so I knew that I had to make this absolutely clear when I meet with my NDIA planner to ensure that I don't lose anything I currently have.

In the months leading up to the rollout of the NDIS, I had several meetings with my case manager Joan (from MDNSW), to work out all the support I currently have, how it enables me to access and participate in the community and what I do everyday. It's almost like mapping out my whole life and putting it on paper, going into as detailed as what my schedule is like on a daily and weekly basis. This is the one thing I struggle with the most, because I don't have a set schedule or routine – between Uni and work I am constantly running between places. There are days when I work from home and other days I come home just in time for bed and head off again as soon as the sun makes its appearance. So I found it hard to pin point what my day/week looks like – we ended up doing a rough estimate, which would be enough to help the NDIA planner get an idea of what I do. Furthermore, it would help the NDIA planner understand that I wouldn't be able to do any of this if I don't have a strong support network in place.

The NDIS planning meeting came around sooner than I expected. Before I knew it, I was sitting in the room with my Case Managers, Occupational Therapist, NDIA planner and her manager. It was essentially up to me to decide who would attend the meeting with me – I specifically asked my Case Managers and Occupational Therapist to attend the meeting because they know me best. Apart from my family, my Case Managers and Occupational Therapist know my life story so well that they can probably say it out loud off by heart. Most of all, they know exactly what support I need and how much it means to me.

We went through a three hour meeting developing 'My First Plan'. I didn't quite understand what 'My First Plan' meant until then – it is essentially a plan that puts together all the services and support that you currently have and for

it to continue over the next 12 months. The aim of this is to ensure that every person with a disability can maintain and continue with the services they currently have so they can have a seamless transition over to the NDIS. In the meeting we covered areas including what support I currently have at home and in the community, as well as all my therapy hours with allied health professionals. It was an odd feeling mapping out my life and planning for the next 12 months with my NDIA planner as I literally only met her 5 minutes before the meeting – luckily all planners are well trained and prepared for this and come into the meeting with a client-centred approach. At this stage I am waiting to receive 'My First Plan', I am really looking forward to seeing it all come together!

Melanie Tran 20yrs, MDNSW Member

MY NDIS TIPS

My tips on preparing for the planning meeting

1. Know what you need

Nobody knows you better than you – make sure you articulate exactly what support you need and how it will affect you. Remember that not everyone is familiar with your conditions and support needs so go into as much details as you can. Write down every little thing.

2. Be organized

Spend some time with the key people in your support network and map out everything you currently have and do with as much details as possible.

3. Plan ahead

Try to map out your near future. Where do you see yourself in 12 months? What goals do you want to achieve and what do you need to make that happen?

4. Strong communication

Go into the meeting well prepared – know exactly what you need and make sure you get your ideas across.

5. Post meeting follow up

Expect to do follow ups after the meeting – your planner may contact you to clarify things or you may need to get some letters to support you

There is definitely a lot to take in, but it's worth it. Just remember to keep calm and power on!