An aerial photograph of a coastline. The top portion shows a sandy beach with sparse green vegetation and dark, jagged rock formations. Below the beach is a wide, shallow area of water with a brownish-orange hue. In the foreground, a wave with white foam is breaking, transitioning into a deep green sea.

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) North Coast NSW Quick Guide

**For people with a
mental health condition
and psychosocial disability**

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This guide was created by Connect to Wellbeing North Coast, a Neami National service funded by the North Coast Primary Health Network to provide a single point of contact for consumers, carers, GPs, allied health professionals, and others who are seeking to access or refer people to mental health, AOD and NDIS services.

Cover: Drone shot of Middle Rock Beach at Lake Cathie, near Port Macquarie on the Mid North Coast, New South Wales, Australia, by Nick Clark Creative.



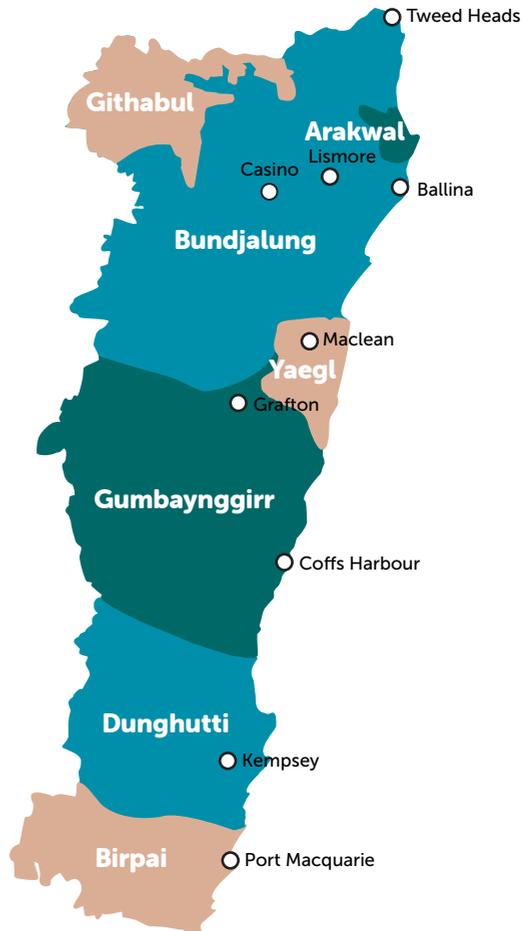
Who is this guide for?

This guide is for you, your family/carers and your health care team.

This guide is for people who have mental health challenges and are having trouble doing everyday activities and want information about the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

This guide is for people who live in the **North Coast NSW** area.
The area reaches from Port Macquarie to Tweed Heads.

This guide is not for people applying for the Disability Support Pension.



What is the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)?

The NDIS is here

It is a way for people with a disability to get the care and supports they need to live a strong life.

Everyone is different

The NDIS offers support that is made in a unique package that's tailored to every participant.

What matters to me.

Each person has different priorities in their life. The NDIS gives people choice and flexibility over the supports they need.

How do I know if I need the NDIS?

The NDIS uses a term called 'psychosocial disability' to describe people with a mental health condition who may need the NDIS.

If you have a 'psychosocial disability' it could mean that you can't do everyday things without help including:

- looking after yourself
- hanging out with friends
- looking after the house
- banking or shopping

If you have a 'psychosocial disability' you might have difficulty:

- finding work
- going to school
- keeping connected in your community
- caring for yourself and your family

Not everyone who has a mental health condition will have a psychosocial disability.

Having a psychosocial disability can significantly impact your life and potential recovery. If you have a psychosocial disability, the NDIS may be able to help you access support.

Do I need to provide a mental health diagnosis to access the NDIS?

A specific mental health diagnosis is preferred but not essential. You must provide evidence of the impact of the mental health condition to access the NDIS, but the mental health condition does not have to be named.

- NDIS support is based on the impact of the mental health condition, rather than the diagnosis itself.
- You will only be eligible for the NDIS if the mental health condition greatly impacts your ability to do everyday activities.
- You will only be eligible for the NDIS if it is confirmed that your impairment is likely to remain across your lifetime.

What about accessing NDIS support for my child?

For parents of children aged 0-6 who have a disability, developmental delay, or are concerned about their child's development, the NDIS Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) is the place to start.

- Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) is the best way to support children with disability or developmental delay.
- The NDIS approach to early intervention aims to give children aged 0-6 years quick access to support.
- Contact your local Early Childhood Early Intervention Partner at Social Futures on [1800 522 679](tel:1800522679).

What support can I get from the NDIS?

There are different types of support you can get from the NDIS including:

- special accommodation such as group homes or shared housing
- support for staying in your own home
- help going to school or looking for a job
- learning new skills such as cooking or managing money
- help getting to appointments and activities in the community you live in.

How does the NDIS work?

- The NDIS allows people to apply for funding if they have a disability.
- This funding amount is unique to each person and matched to their level of need.
- The funding is spent directly on support and services for the person who receives the funding.
- The person who receives the funding decides who provides the support.
- All the details of a participant's support are outlined in their NDIS plan.
- Participants can manage their own NDIS Plan — which means they are the one paying invoices for services provided (using the funding in their plan).
- Or they can get help from a business to help them manage their plan. This means they have another person pay all their invoices for services provided.
- NDIS plans are updated regularly and can be changed as participants' needs change.

Am I able to apply for the NDIS?

Before we start to talk about accessing the NDIS, let's make sure you meet basic requirements.

To become an NDIS participant, you must:

- be an Australian citizen, or have a Permanent or Special Category Visa (SCV) and
- be under 65 years old when you apply to join the NDIS and
- live in an area where the NDIS is available

You can check if you are eligible to apply on the NDIS website: www.ndis.gov.au/applying-access-ndis/am-i-eligible

If you are over the age of 65, you might be able to get support from the My Aged Care initiative. Visit: www.myagedcare.gov.au/support-people-living-with-disability

Note that you can receive the Disability Support Pension even if you access the NDIS.

Recovery is still just as important

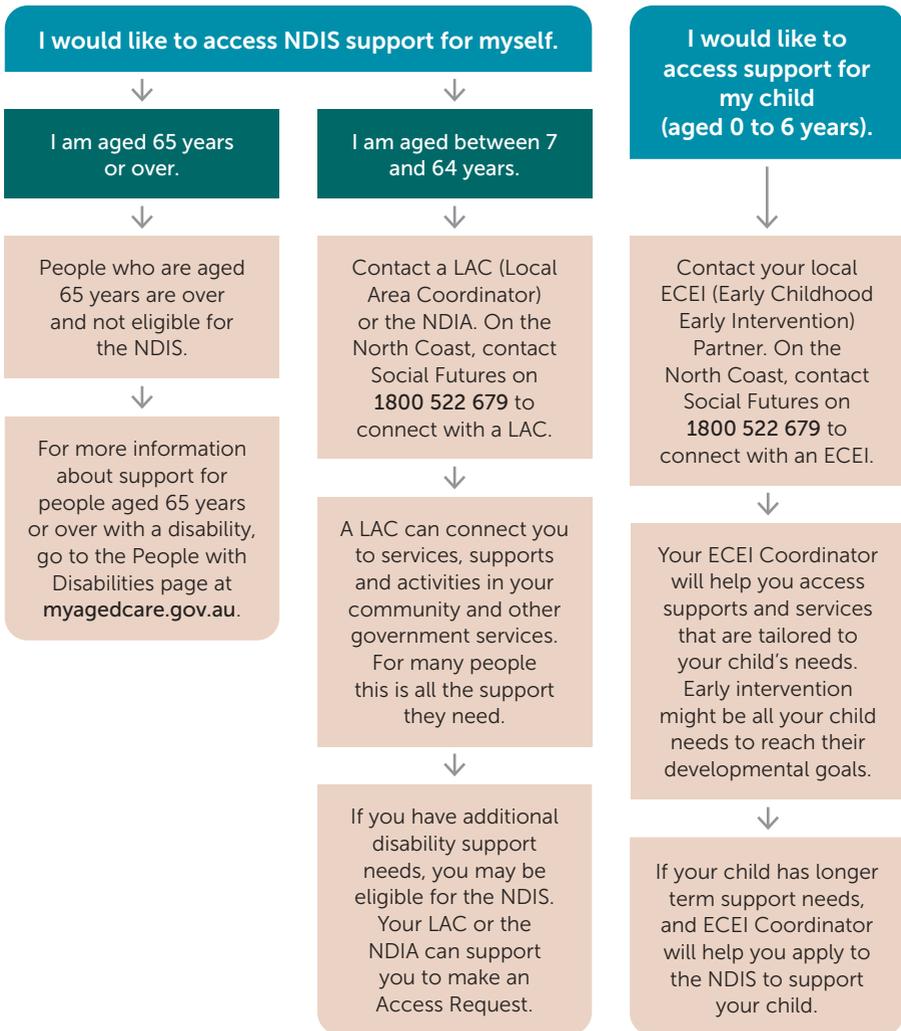
A person can have a mental health condition that causes a lifelong impairment and still work towards achieving their best state of wellbeing.

- The NDIS aims to build the skills and independence of people who access it.
- NDIS plans are reviewed annually and adjusted based on individual requirements.

Getting started with the NDIS on the North Coast NSW

Starting the application process happens in different ways for different people. This diagram provides you with an overview of who to contact depending on your situation.

If you currently receive disability support from the State Government, an NDIS representative will contact you about accessing the NDIS.



Local Area Coordinators in the North Coast NSW area

A Local Area Coordinator (LAC) is someone who can help you apply for the NDIS, make your NDIS plan happen or connect you with other supports in your local area.

They can help you if you do not understand something.

They can help you along any part of your journey and you can contact them from the start.

Social Futures is the organisation that provides Local Area Coordinators in the North Coast NSW area. Social Futures have funded other organisations to deliver this service in some areas.

To get in touch with a Local Area Coordinator on the North Coast, contact Social Futures:

- Phone **1800 522 679**
- Email LAC@socialfutures.org.au
- Website socialfutures.org.au/ndis-lac

Making an application to the NDIS

Making an application to the NDIS is called making an Access Request.

You can start an Access Request by contacting the NDIS on **1800 800 110**. You can do this over the phone or by getting a form sent to you. Local Area Coordinators can help you make an Access Request. Making an Access Request involves:

- confirming your identity and/or a person's authority to act on your behalf (also known as a 'nominee' – visit the NDIS website to find out more about nominees: www.ndis.gov.au/understanding/families-and-carers/guardians-and-nominees-explained)
- questions to see if you meet the NDIS access requirements (age, residence and disability)
- questions about providing consent to enter the NDIS and about seeking information from third parties.*

* Third parties are other people or organisations that you might involve in the application process to support your application.

To allow the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) to determine whether you meet the psychosocial disability or Early Childhood Early Intervention Access, you will be asked to provide additional information after you make your Access Request.

This may include:

- information about your disability and how it impacts on your day-to-day life
- copies of existing information, including letters or reports
- requesting your treating health professional to fill out and sign a form.

To read about what type of evidence may be requested, visit the 'Mental health and the NDIS' page on the NDIS website: www.ndis.gov.au/understanding/how-ndis-works/mental-health-and-ndis

If my application is not approved

Other than the NDIS, there are several support options and services provided by government and the community sector for people with a psychosocial disability or mental health condition. The NDIA (National Disability Insurance Agency) may identify that your supports are best delivered by these other services rather than the NDIS.

One example of this support is the Footprints2Wellbeing program. This is a free program for people who live across the North Coast with moderate to severe and/or episodic mental health conditions. Visit their website www.buttery.org.au/footprints2wellbeing or call **02 6687 1111** for more information.

To find out about local services that may be able to support you, you can phone the Connect to Wellbeing North Coast service on **1300 160 339**.

Local Area Coordinators (LACs) and Early Childhood Early Intervention Partners (ECEIs) can also help link you to services. Contact Social Futures to find a LAC or ECEI Partner on the NSW North Coast:

- Phone **1800 522 679**
- Email LAC@socialfutures.org.au
- Website socialfutures.org.au/ndis-lac

Another organisation that you can reach out to is Disability Advocacy NSW. They can provide general advocacy support and help you if you would like to appeal a decision made by the NDIA. Visit their website to find out more: da.org.au/ndis

If you think a decision made by the NDIA is wrong, you can also request an internal review of that decision. Visit the NDIA website for more information: www.ndis.gov.au/applying-access-ndis/how-apply/receiving-your-access-decision/internal-review-decision

If my application is approved

If your application for the NDIS is approved, you will be contacted to arrange a planning meeting to discuss your support and funding needs.

The NDIS allows you to have as much choice and control as possible over the supports funded or provided in your NDIS plan.

Your LAC or Support Coordinator, or Early Childhood Early Intervention Partner, will help you start your NDIS plan. They can help you:

- understand your plan and what supports and services you can pay for with your NDIS funding
- learn what is the role of other services, such as the health or education systems, or your state or territory government
- connect with community and other government services
- find providers who meet your needs and will help you achieve your goals
- put service agreements and service bookings in place with your providers.

They can act as a point of contact if you have questions, concerns or something in your life changes.

What does it mean to create a NDIS plan?

Your NDIS plan will be based on the discussion you had in your planning meeting and includes basic information about:

- your psychosocial disability, your day-to-day activities, where you live, who you live with or who cares for you
- the support you get from family and friends that is not funded but will help you work towards your goals
- services and supports funded and delivered by community or other government services like support groups, health centres, libraries and public transport
- the current goals you would like to achieve as part of your plan and the long-term goals you have identified for your life
- what funding you have been allocated and what this funding is for.

Using your NDIS plan and finding a local provider

There are many service providers across the North Coast NSW who can provide support services under your NDIS Plan.

The list can change as new service providers come on board. Your LAC or ECEI Partner will be a good person to discuss support options or you can contact a service provider directly.

You can find service providers on the NDIS website. Follow this link for more information about receiving support from a provider and to find a registered provider:

www.ndis.gov.au/participants/working-providers

You can also search for a service provider on the Connect to Wellbeing online directory: ndis.connecttowellbeing.org.au

Reviewing your plan and your goals

Your first NDIS plan review usually falls 12 months after your plan has started.

If you haven't heard from the NDIS six weeks prior, you are advised to contact your LAC or call the NDIS directly on [1800 800 110](tel:1800800110).

Your plan review is an opportunity to check if your supports are working for you and helping you towards achieving your goals.

A plan review can be done face-to-face or over the phone. You are welcome to bring along a support person for your plan review.



