



## **The New Pathway to the NDIS Application: A Background**

The NDIA has a new customer relationship management system and provider portal called PACE. Testing of the new system has been underway in Tasmania since 14 November 2022. The national rollout of PACE commenced in stages from 30 October 2023 and will be fully implemented nationwide from February 2024. This new system has been structured to be more user-friendly and make it easier for NDIS staff, partners and providers to provide participants with a high-quality support experience. The system will store participant details, inquiries, plans and budgets and is linked to the provider portal and the new my NDIS participant portal.

## **What has happened by now?**

Since 30 October 2023, individuals receiving their first NDIS plan have had their plan developed using the PACE system.

## **What will happen next?**

Between November 2023 and late February 2024, any participant with an expiring plan will be contacted.

- If no change is required, their plan will be transitioned to the PACE system once the rollover period concludes (or sooner if changes in circumstances happen).
- If changes are needed to their plan, a new plan will be created in PACE.
- Starting from the end of February 2024, all expiring plans will gradually transition into a plan created in PACE.

## **What does PACE change about NDIS support types?**

- A new support type, called Recurring Transport, will be added to the Core, Capacity and Capital supports offered by the NDIS.
- New categories will be added to Core, Capacity and Capital supports:
  - Home and Living and Young people in residual aged care are added to Core supports.
  - Assistive Technology, maintenance, repair and replacement and specialised Disability Accommodation (SDA) will be added to Capital supports.
  - Behaviour supports are added to Capacity Building supports.

**The funds for the additional categories are not flexible and cannot be transferred to other supports.**

- The names of the five existing categories under Capacity Building supports will be changed to the following:



- Support Coordination to **Support Coordination and Psychosocial Recovery Coach**
- Improved Relationships to **Relationships**
- Improved Health and Well-being to **Health and Well-being**
- Improved Learning to **Lifelong Learning**
- Improved Life Choices to **Choose and Control**.

### What won't PACE change?

While PACE will change support types and categories and the way the NDIA interacts with participants during their plan journey, PACE will not change the following:

- The supports participants receive
- The structure of NDIS plans
- Item support numbers
- The NDIS Act
- The registration process for providers
- NDIS Commission obligations.

### The new pathway to the NDIS application

For a person who wants to apply to the NDIS either for themselves or their children younger than 9, the NDIS partner (usually a Local Area Coordinator (LAC) or early childhood partner) in their community is their first point of contact.<sup>1</sup> NDIS partners will help the person to create community connections or early connections (if they seek support for their children younger than 9). Some key considerations about community connections are:

- While community connections is an NDIS service, people can apply for this service without applying for the NDIS.
- Community connections typically take place during one or two meetings. However, there's no set limit for the number of the meetings, and people can reach out to their LACs as many times as needed. Also, based on their specific needs, some people may need regular conversations with their LACs.
- The supports a person receives through community connections depends on their needs. But, due to new improvements in the NDIS application process, NDIS partners will now support people with disabilities even if they are not eligible for the NDIS. This means that people with disabilities living in Australia can access community connections service regardless of their age, citizenship, or visa status.
- Community connections provide people with disabilities with the following:
  - Information about different types of mainstream and community support in their local area. While mainstream supports are the supports from other government

---

<sup>1</sup> Since the inception of the NDIS in 2013, local area coordinators have been funded to facilitate community connections. Previously, this service was referred to as 'linking you to information and support in your community.'



funded services, like health, mental health, and education, community services are services that a person can get through community organisations, like religious groups and local councils. So, these are the supports outside the NDIS and generally available to everyone. Examples of community supports include education (e.g., universities, TAFE and community learning programs) and community health services (such as mental health services).

- Capacity building so that people with disabilities can do what matters most to them. This can include getting supports to enhance their independence and engage in activities they enjoy within their local community as establishing connections with their community can contribute to their improved well-being and overall safety.
- Application to the NDIS
- Connection with other people for peer support. Peer-to-peer and community-based support systems facilitate the exchange of information, promoting the growth of confidence and knowledge while fostering community bonds through sharing personal experiences, benefiting both individuals and the community. Peer support can be offered individually or in group settings, whether through online platforms or face-to-face sessions and programs.

### **What is a community connections plan?**

To document information about a person's goals, the way they aim to achieve those goals and the types of community and mainstream supports that might be beneficial to them, a community connections plan is required. If a person with disabilities does not want a community connections plan, the NDIS partners can still help them with general enquiries and information and making connections in their community. If they want to have a plan, they should consider whether they want

- information to help them connect to community and mainstream supports
- to provide the NDIA with their personal information, like their name, address and date of birth
- to meet with a local area coordinator to talk more about their situation and support needs
- more support than one or two short phone calls or discussions
- written information, rather than verbally provided information, to help them make connections
- to discuss their goals
- help in developing their goals
- to know if they are eligible for the NDIS, and if they like to apply to become an NDIS participant.

It should be noted that a community connections plan is different from an NDIS plan. While a community connections plan includes parts of an NDIS plan, such as goals and community and mainstream supports, it does not include supports funded by the NDIS.



If a person finds that the community connections plan is not meeting their needs, or they do not wish to trial a community connections plan, the local area coordinator will initiate the NDIS access application and explain what evidence is required. Community connections duplicate the services provided by the CPSP program. So, existing CPSP clients can generally bypass this process and proceed directly to an NDIS access application. With the new pathway for NDIS access, it is important to note that there are no changes to

- the eligibility criteria
- the type of the information and evidence individuals need to provide.

### **What does the changes to the NDIS application mean for CPSP support workers?**

CPSP support workers still have an important role to play in supporting someone to access the NDIS. This includes:

- Supporting the person to connect with the LAC to start the access process, including:
  - Explaining how the new process works
  - Supporting the person to connect with the LAC to begin the access process and offering to attend the initial access meeting with them
  - Supporting the person to by-pass the communication connections plan, which is replicating the supports that they had already been receiving through the CPSP.
- Collecting the disability evidence following the meeting with the LAC. Key tips to consider are:
  - You should still use the evidence of psychosocial disability form.
  - Include support worker letter as per usual.
  - For assessments recommended by the LAC that are not funded (e.g., OT assessments) consider alternative evidence such as the LSP-16 or letters from treating psychologists or counsellors.
- With the participants permission you can still be listed as the primary contact during the access process. Consent can be provided during the initial access meeting with the LAC.

If you want to learn more about the PACE changes, please refer to the NDIS dedicated [website](#).

**Disclaimer:** The Psychosocial Support Capacity Building Project believes that the information contained in this publication was correct at the time of publishing (January 2024). However, the Project reserves the right to change any part of this publication without further notice. The information provided in this document should not substitute other legal, medical, financial or professional advice.