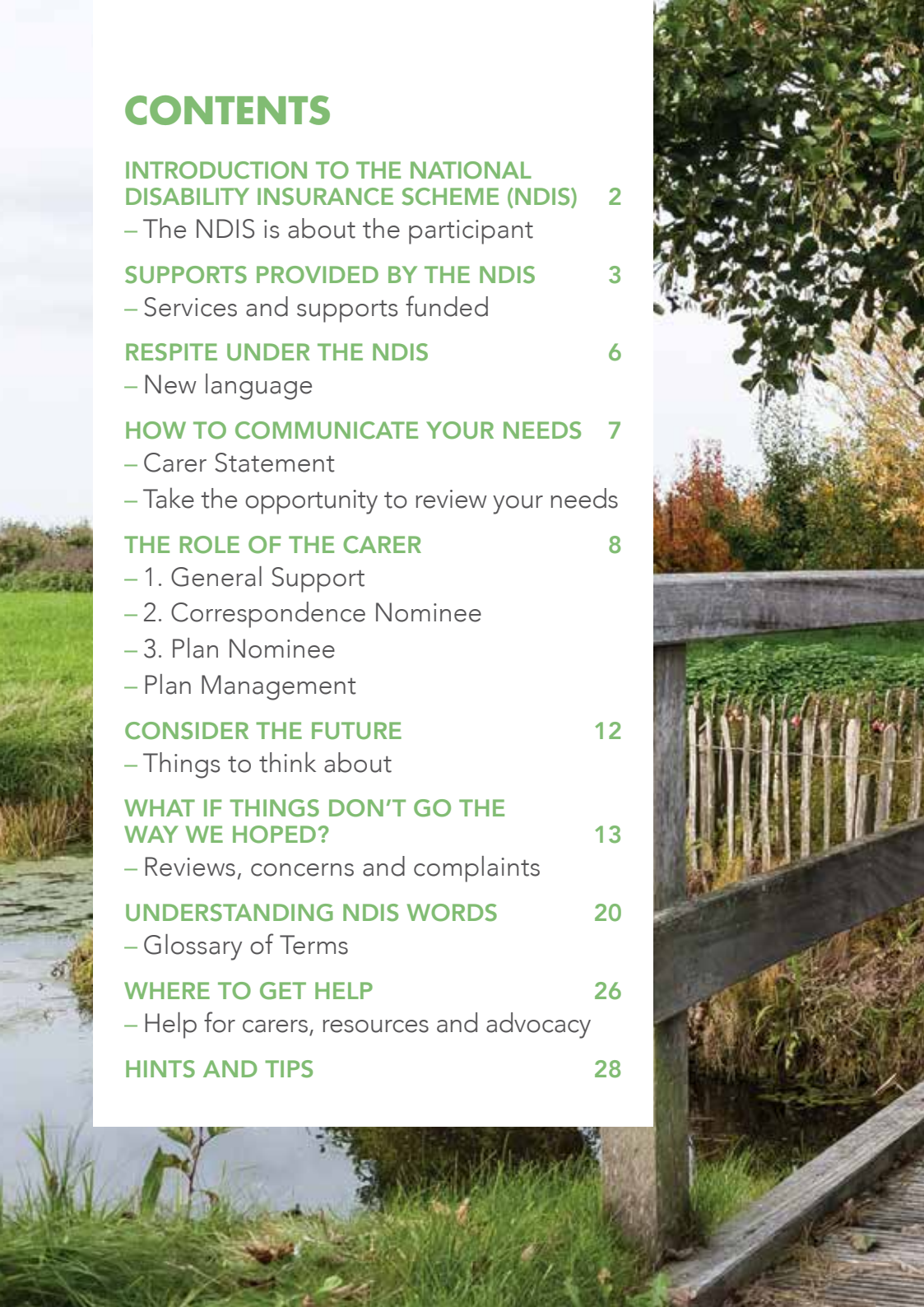


# NDIS CARERS HANDBOOK



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Caring can be hard and it may be difficult for families and carers to find time to pursue their own goals, foster key relationships or maintain good mental and physical health. For these reasons, carers also need support to live an ordinary life. Call the Carers Victoria Advisory Line on 1800 514 845 to find out what programs are available to support you.



# INTRODUCTION TO THE NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME (NDIS)

The NDIS aims to help people with disability to be more independent and live an ordinary life. The most important thing to understand when thinking about the NDIS as a carer of a person with disability is that the NDIS plan is all about them.

The NDIS can improve the life of the person with disability by providing various supports to enable greater choice and control over how they live. This could be a support worker to assist them to participate in community activities or assistive technology or aids to help them to move around the community more independently. This can also help improve the life of their carer by reducing the direct support they need to provide.

## NDIS Carers Handbook

This handbook aims to provide clear, practical advice and support on how to achieve the best possible outcomes for the person with care needs whilst also improving the health and wellbeing of carers who support them.

Caring can be hard and it may be difficult for families and carers to find time to pursue their own goals, foster key relationships or maintain good mental and physical health. Carers also need support to live an ordinary life.

If you would like more information about eligibility and accessing the NDIS, please visit our landing page at [www.carersvic.com.au/ndis](http://www.carersvic.com.au/ndis)

Call the Carers Victoria Advisory Line on 1800 514 845 to find out what programs are available to support you.

**More information about the NDIS is at [www.ndis.gov.au](http://www.ndis.gov.au)**

# SUPPORTS PROVIDED BY THE NDIS

The NDIS funds 'reasonable and necessary' services and supports based on each person's needs and goals.

To be reasonable and necessary, a support must:

- be related to the person's disability
- not include day-to-day living costs unrelated to the person's disability support needs, such as groceries
- represent value for money
- be likely to be effective and beneficial to the person, and
- take into account informal supports given to the person by families, carers, networks, and the community.

Funding is available under three types of support budgets:

## Core funding

For day to day support, such as personal care, support to access the community or other or help with daily life. This includes consumables and transport.

## Capacity funding

For skill building, training and learning across a range of life areas such as employment, daily living or health and wellbeing. The funds can only be used for the specific purpose.

## Capital funding

For buying one off items such as mobility equipment, home or vehicle modifications or communication technology. The funds can only be used for the specific purpose.



## Examples of funded support

### Funded

- Help with daily personal activities such as showering, getting ready for the day.
- Transport to support the participant in joining community, work and family life activities.
- Workplace help for participants to successfully get or keep employment.
- Therapeutic supports like Physio and Speech including behaviour support.
- Help with household tasks like gardening and cleaning to allow the participant to maintain their home environment.

## Funded

- Skilled workers to assess a participant's need for aids or equipment and then help them with set up and training.
- Home modification design and construction.
- Mobility equipment and vehicle modifications.
- Help to learn independent living skills like getting around on public transport, managing money and cooking meals.

## Excluded

- A service or support not related to the participant's disability. E.g. gym membership.
- Supports that are already funded by the NDIS (you can't get the same thing funded twice) e.g. same support under two categories.
- Support already provided by the health, education, employment and community sectors. These sectors will continue to provide support.
- Items that relate to everyday-to-day living costs that are not related to a participant's support needs e.g. groceries.
- Services or supports likely to cause harm to the participant or pose a risk to others.

## RESPIRE UNDER THE NDIS

### There are new terms used for some supports in the NDIS plan

As the NDIS aims to support the person with disability to be more independent and increase their capacity to participate in the community, there are some options for respite in an NDIS plan.

In some care relationships, the care needs of the participant mean respite is required to sustain the caring role.

Accommodation is not the only form of respite. If facility based respite is needed, there is a category of support in the NDIS to provide facility-based services called '**Short term accommodation assistance**' (STAA).

The funding allocated to the NDIS participant's plan will depend on the level of disability and intensity of support required from family or informal carers. The carers' work, study and other commitments may also be considered when determining which level is approved.

There are some circumstances where a higher level of support may be appropriate, such as where there are:

- unstable sleep patterns
- complex and high support needs
- significant behavioural challenges
- more than one child with a disability in the household
- other regular assistance required overnight.

### Respite accommodation must be specified in the NDIS plan as Short-Term Accommodation Assistance (STAA)

For more details about respite support and STAA visit [www.carersvic.com.au/ndisrespite](http://www.carersvic.com.au/ndisrespite)



# HOW TO COMMUNICATE YOUR NEEDS

## Carer Statement

The most common way for carers and families to tell the NDIS what they need is to write a Carer Statement and give this to their NDIS planner.

The Carer Statement is your chance to tell your story and help your NDIS planner to understand the level of support required. In the statement you can talk about what it means for you and other family members to provide care for your NDIS participant.

Describe in detail the support and care you currently provide. Then list which of these tasks you are able and willing to continue to provide, and which tasks or care you need assistance with and should be included in the NDIS Plan.

You may also want to mention how the supports a participant would receive through the NDIS will help to maintain a healthy, well-functioning home environment.

You can find some example carer statements at [www.carersvic.com.au/sampleplan](http://www.carersvic.com.au/sampleplan)

Take this opportunity to review your own needs. Think about your short, medium and long-term goals. Think about the supports that will help achieve these.



## THE ROLE OF THE CARER

Carers can play an informal or an official role for the person you care for with the NDIS. This depends on how much the person you care for is able to make decisions, communicate, and manage administration and financial tasks themselves.

There are three ways you might work together with the NDIA:

### 1. General Support

You might help the person you care for but you have no formal authority to speak with the NDIS or make decisions on their behalf.

### 2. Correspondence Nominee

A correspondence nominee can officially do all activities that a participant would do with the NDIS, except:

- prepare, review or replace the participant's plan; and/or
- manage the funding for supports.

### 3. Plan Nominee

A plan nominee can do all activities that a participant would do in relation to managing their NDIS plan.

What type of support do I need to provide?	NDIS Role
<p><b>The person I care for just needs a little bit of help with things like talking through support options and finding providers</b></p> <p>They will manage most things to do with the NDIS themselves.</p>	General Support
<p><b>The person I care for needs me to make requests and receive letters and notices from the NDIA on their behalf</b></p>	Correspondence Nominee
<p>The person I care for needs me to do most of the communication, planning and paperwork with the NDIS.</p> <p><b>I need to be responsible for how the funding will be spent</b></p>	Plan Nominee

#### Some other things to consider

Parents or legal guardians of children under 18 will be automatically appointed as plan nominees.

For over 18 year old participants a parent or legal guardian will need to register as a plan or correspondence nominee if necessary.

The NDIS must be notified if the situation between a participant and their nominees changes as this can impact the role they play.

# What is my role in managing the money? How do we pay for services?

There are four ways an NDIS Plan budget can be managed:

1. Self Managed	
<p>Participants or nominees find, book and manage supports.</p> <p>Participants or nominees submit invoices for payment via the NDIS Participant Portal and must keep records of all invoices.</p> <p>The participant can choose a provider who is NDIS registered or not.</p>	<p>Maximum choice and control, maximum responsibility</p>
2. Plan Managed	
<p>A plan management service provider (sometimes called a financial intermediary) will pay the bills once they receive the invoice from the service provider.</p> <p>The funding to cover the cost of the plan management service provider will be built into the plan budget.</p> <p>The participant can choose a service provider who is NDIS registered or not.</p>	<p>Maximum choice and control, medium responsibility</p>

### 3. Agency Managed

The NDIA will pay providers directly.  
The participant can only use providers who are an NDIA registered provider of supports.

Minimum choice and control, minimum responsibility

### 4. Combination

The participant may choose to use a combination of these options. For example they may choose to self manage their community participation funds, and an agency manages the rest of their budget.

Maximum choice and control, medium responsibility

A Participant and/or their Nominees will be asked which option they prefer when they have their NDIS Plan meeting.

No matter which option the person you care for selects, they will remain in control of which support providers are chosen.

For further information visit [www.ndis.gov.au](http://www.ndis.gov.au) and search for 'managing your plan'.





## CONSIDER THE FUTURE

There comes a time in almost all care relationships where carers can no longer continue to provide care for a range of reasons.

If you feel your capacity or willingness to care is now reduced, or may decrease in the future, it is important to let the NDIS planner know as this may change the types of supports included in the plan. For example you may be ageing and the person you care for may need permanent accommodation in the future. Include this as a goal.

If this is a conversation you feel uncomfortable having in the presence of the person with care needs, you can arrange to speak to the planner separately by phone or in person in their office. By raising this issue with the planner, both you and the person you care for can be better supported now and in the future.

## WHAT IF THINGS DON'T GO THE WAY WE HOPED?

If you or the person you care for is unhappy with an experience you have had within the NDIS, it is important to make yourself heard.

There are a few things you can do:

- request a meeting with your Local Area Coordinator (LAC) or the NDIA
- request a review of a decision. For example, if your application to register for the NDIS was “denied”
- request a plan review
- make a complaint
- engage an advocate
- make a complaint to the Commonwealth Ombudsman.

There are different ways to get in touch with the NDIA:

- **in writing** Chief Executive Officer  
National Disability Insurance Agency  
GPO Box 700 Canberra ACT 2601
- **talking to someone** at an NDIA office
- **calling** 1800 800 110
- **sending an email** to [enquiries@ndis.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@ndis.gov.au)

## Available options if responding to different situations

### Ineligibility

The NDIA will make a decision about the eligibility of every person who requests access to the scheme.

**If you are deemed ineligible**, the next step is to request a review of a reviewable decision (RORD) by contacting the NDIA. Download a Reviewable Decision form from the website or request one be sent to you when you call. Visit [www.ndis.gov.au](http://www.ndis.gov.au) and search for 'review of an application'.

**When asking for a review**, explain why you think the decision is incorrect and provide supporting evidence if you have it. Be aware it can take several months for a review of a reviewable decision.





## Dissatisfied with the...

### Allocated planner

The best place to start is to try to talk with the planner first. Sometimes they may need a little bit more information about where you are coming from or the challenges you are facing to help you better.

If you are still dissatisfied with the outcome, or you don't feel comfortable in doing this, you will need to call, email or write to the LAC office explaining the situation and request to speak with a Supervisor. The office contact details should be provided by the planner.

Remember you can request a different planner if you feel the one you have been allocated will be unable to effectively support the person you care for.

### Planning process

If your Planner works with a LAC service you will need to ask them what the complaints procedure is for their service and request any forms they use.

If your planner is with the NDIA, download a complaint form from the website below or request one be sent to you when you call or visit an NDIA office. [www.ndis.gov.au](http://www.ndis.gov.au) and search for 'feedback complaints'.

Written complaints can be emailed to [feedback@ndis.gov.au](mailto:feedback@ndis.gov.au) or sent to NDIA PO Box 700 Canberra ACT 2601.

## Dissatisfied with the...

### Service provider

Try to talk with your Service Provider first. In an NDIS world the participant is the one who has the funding, so they and their family and carers are the customer. If service providers want to continue to provide services in an NDIS world they must be responsive to the needs of their clients and their families.

If you are unhappy with the outcome or you don't feel comfortable talking to them, you will need to follow their 'Complaint Policy'. You should have received this when you first started the service, if not ask for a copy.

If you lodge a complaint and still feel dissatisfied or the situation is urgent, or you don't feel comfortable calling, you can contact the:

#### Disability Services Commissioner

- **phone** 1800 677 342
- **email** [complaints@odsc.vic.gov.au](mailto:complaints@odsc.vic.gov.au) with your details and they will call you
- **use TTY** on 1300 726 563
- **use National Relay Service** and asking for 1800 677 342

Also remember you can choose to find a new provider. You will be required to give 14 days notice if you decide to go to another provider.

## Dissatisfied with the...

### Final plan

You can request a **plan review** within three months of receiving it by contacting the NDIA via phone, post, email or visiting an office.

Keep in mind this is a slow process and it is much better to do as much preparation as possible for your planning meeting to gain the best chance of receiving a plan which meets the needs of the person you care for.

### Review of plan or decision review

If you are unhappy with the **review of a reviewable decision** or a **plan review** you can apply to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT). The AAT is an independent body charged with reviewing the merits of administrative decisions made by the NDIA against the relevant commonwealth laws.

A review must be made within 28 days, but extensions can be granted.

To apply online visit [www.carersvic.com.au/aatgovapplyreview](http://www.carersvic.com.au/aatgovapplyreview)

Alternatively, you can fill out an application form or write a letter to the NDIA.

If you need help you can call **1800 228 333**.

People who do not speak English can call the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450 and ask them to call the AAT.

## Dissatisfied with the...

### NDIA and how it operates

If you are unhappy with the way the NDIA has interacted with you or with how a plan has unfolded, you can submit a complaint.

This is different to a request for review or plan review. It is not asking for a decision or your plan to be changed, it is speaking up and providing feedback to the NDIS about how they have supported you and the person you care for.

You will need to fill out a Complaints Form which is available online or by calling the NDIA and asking for one to be mailed to you. Send a completed form to the NDIA via email [feedback@ndis.gov.au](mailto:feedback@ndis.gov.au) or by post. Alternatively, drop your form off at any NDIS office.

### NDIA's response to a complaint

If you are unhappy with a response from the NDIA you can make a further complaint to the Commonwealth Ombudsman.

The Commonwealth Ombudsman is responsible for resolving complaints against commonwealth agencies (like the NDIS), informally, impartially and as quickly as possible.

You can contact the Commonwealth Ombudsman by:

- **Phone** The office is open 9:00am to 5:00pm Monday to Friday, Australian Eastern Standard Time
  - **Complaints** 1300 362 072 (Calls from mobile phones are charged at mobile phone rates)
  - **Indigenous Line** 1800 060 789
- **Online** [www.ombudsman.gov.au](http://www.ombudsman.gov.au)
- **Post** Commonwealth Ombudsman  
GPO Box 442 Canberra ACT 2601



## Who can assist me with making a complaint?

An advocacy service can help you to identify what steps must be taken to resolve your problem and offer support in making it happen.

To find one:

- call the NDIS hotline on 1800 800 110 and ask for an 'advocate', or
- go to Disability Advocate Resource Unit at [www.daru.org.au](http://www.daru.org.au), or
- online at [www.carersvic.com.au/dssdisabilityfinder](http://www.carersvic.com.au/dssdisabilityfinder), or
- email a request to [disabilityadvocacy@dss.gov.au](mailto:disabilityadvocacy@dss.gov.au), or
- call the Carers Victoria Advisory Line on 1800 514 845.



## UNDERSTANDING NDIS WORDS

### Access Request Form (ARF)

The form people fill out to help the NDIA identify if a person is eligible to become a participant.

### Capacity Building

Supports that improve a participants ability to carry out an activity or function.

### Choice and Control

A participant has the right to tell the NDIA about what is important to them, and to decide how they want to receive their supports and who from.

### **Continuity of support**

Where people have been receiving government funded specialist disability support but are ineligible for the NDIS, they will be assisted to achieve similar outcomes to those they were achieving prior to the introduction of the Scheme.

### **Correspondence Nominee**

Able to seek information for and receive and notices from the NDIA on behalf of the participant.

### **Formal supports**

Supports participants have to book and pay for.

### **Goals**

Form the basis of an NDIS Plan. Should be important to the participant, reasonable and necessary and well thought out.

### **In Kind**

Under the bi-lateral arrangements with states and territories, the NDIA provides some funded supports to a participant through a combination of services which have already been paid for by the states.

### **Informal supports**

The supports participants get from the people around them, for example family, friends, neighbours.

## **Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC)**

Refers to the supports and services which help NDIS participants. Examples include supports available in the local community, such as study, or sports. Building individual capacity through the provision of assistance such as diagnosis advice, peer support and skills development, and training. Support for mainstream and community supports in a participant's area.

## **Local Area Coordinator (LAC)**

Work in partnership with the NDIA, to assist people with disability – including those who do not become participants – in coordinating the supports they receive both through and outside the NDIS. The LAC'S role is to help participants write and manage their plans and connect participants to local services and supports.

## **Mainstream services**

The government systems providing services to the Australian public e.g. health, mental health, education, justice, housing, child protection and employment services.

## **National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)**

The responsible agency implementing and managing the NDIS.

## **National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)**

The insurance scheme that pays for services and supports for people with a disability.



## NDIS Plan

A written agreement worked out with the participant, stating their goals and needs, and the reasonable and necessary supports approved by the NDIS. Each participant has their own individual plan.

## NDIS Planner

The NDIS staff member who participants and guardians/nominees meet with to design an NDIS plan.

## NDIS registered service providers

An NDIS registered individual or organisation delivering a support or a product to an NDIS participant. These organisations must meet relevant requirements covering qualifications, approvals, experience and capacity to provide the approved supports. These are listed in the NDIS My Place Portal.

## Nominee

Nominees are appointed where requested by a participant to act on their behalf, or where necessary. If a guardianship arrangement is in place, it is presumed that the guardian should be appointed as the nominee as their powers and responsibilities are comparable.

There are two types of nominees, see: Plan Nominee and a Correspondence Nominee.

## Participant

A person with a disability who has successfully transitioned to the NDIA and has been accepted for an NDIS plan.

### **Plan Nominee**

Person able to do anything that may be done by a participant relating the participant's plan and funding.

### **Reasonable and Necessary**

The NDIS funds reasonable and necessary supports relating to a person's disability to help them live an ordinary life and achieve their goals.

### **Self Management Funding**

Participants receive all or part of their NDIS funding and they manage their payments for supports and pay their providers directly.

### **Service agreement**

A contract between the participant and the service provider they have chosen to deliver the supports in their participant plan.

### **Service booking**

A Service booking indicates to the provider that a participant has chosen them to provide the supports funded in an NDIS plan. It secures the participant's NDIS funds to their chosen provider.

### **Short Term Accommodation Assistance (STAA)**

The new name for respite in respite houses.

### **Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA)**

Accommodation for people with very high needs who require specialist housing solutions.

## Support Coordination

Assistance to build the skills needed to understand, implement and use a participant's plan. A support coordinator works with a participant to ensure a mix of supports are used to increase participant capacity to maintain relationships, manage service delivery tasks, live more independently and be included in the community.

## Supported Independent Living (SIL)

Assistance from support workers for daily life and to develop skills enabling more independent living.

## Support Worker

A paid person providing personal, physical and emotional support to a person with a disability. Can help with showering, dressing and eating, can assist with outings and social activities or can assist in developing new skills.



# WHERE TO GET HELP

## Carers Victoria

Representing, supporting and advocating for carers.

Access resources, advice, counselling, education forums, carer support groups, online forums, news and events.

Phone 1800 514 845

[www.carersvictoria.org.au](http://www.carersvictoria.org.au)

## National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)

The agency responsible for implementing the NDIS.

Phone 1800 800 110

[www.ndis.gov.au](http://www.ndis.gov.au)

## Carer Gateway

National government online and phone service with information and resources to support carers. Includes a service finder to help carers connect to local support services.

Phone 1800 422 737

[www.carergateway.gov.au](http://www.carergateway.gov.au)

## Department of Social Services (DSS)

Federal government department funding services to carers.

Phone 1300 653 227

[www.dss.gov.au/disability-and-carers/carers](http://www.dss.gov.au/disability-and-carers/carers)

## Office of the Public Advocate

The Victorian Public Advocate is empowered by law to promote and safeguard the rights and interests of people with disability.

To request a visit from a Community Visitor to a Victorian disability accommodation service, supported residential service or mental health facility, contact OPA's Advice Service.

**Phone 1300 309 337**  
**TTY 1300 305 612**

**After hours 1300 309 337**  
**[www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au](http://www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au)**

## Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability (VALID)

Provide systemic advocacy and individual advocacy, peer support and advocacy training for people with disabilities and offer workshops and forums for families.

**NDIS Hotline 1800 655 570**

**[www.valid.org.au](http://www.valid.org.au)**

## Youth Disability Advocacy Service (YDAS)

Offers advocacy, events, training, resources and support to young people aged 12 – 25.

**Phone 0467 763 155**

**[www.yacvic.org.au/ydas](http://www.yacvic.org.au/ydas)**

## HINTS AND TIPS

- Be clear and specific about the person you care for's goals and specify them in the plan.
- Document everything.
- Keep a diary of everyday activities to show when and where personal supports are needed.
- Ask questions of your LAC and support coordinator to ensure you understand what's required in a plan and they understand the participant's needs and what you need to support them.
- Join a carer support group to exchange ideas and advice or to just talk to people also finding their way.
- Seek help from Carers Victoria or other support services if you are struggling.



This handbook is also available in Arabic, Turkish, Simplified Chinese and Vietnamese at [www.carersvic.com.au/ndis-carers-handbook](http://www.carersvic.com.au/ndis-carers-handbook)

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Carers Victoria is supported by the Victorian Government and the Australian Department of Social Services.

Carers Victoria recognises that all individuals and caring situations are unique. We believe every individual should be respected and their experiences, emotions and beliefs valued. Carers Victoria is here to support you.



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