

Reasonable and necessary supports - frequently asked questions

What are reasonable and necessary supports?

The NDIA can only fund supports that meet all the legal criteria in [section 34 of the NDIS Act](#). These criteria are often referred to as the 'reasonable and necessary' support criteria.

The criteria are:

- **Needed because of a qualifying impairment:** The support must be needed because of a qualifying impairment (an impairment which the NDIA has assessed as meeting the disability requirements or early intervention requirements).
- **Support your goals:** The support must help you achieve your goals.
- **Facilitate participation:** The support must help you with activities that facilitate your social and economic participation.
- **Value for money:** The cost of the support must be reasonable, when compared to the benefits achieved and the cost of alternative supports.
- **Effective and beneficial:** The support must be likely to be effective and beneficial for you.
- **Account for reasonable support from informal supports:** The support must not be something that could be reasonably expected to be provided by a family member or friend.
- **NDIS Support:** The support must be a NDIS Support and most appropriately funded by the NDIS.

The Supports for Participants Rules and the [Transitional Supports Rules](#) provide more information about the meaning of these criteria. We will refer to these rules in this fact sheet so you can know the rules the NDIA must follow.

What is a qualifying impairment?

Supports will only be funded if they are necessary to address needs arising from an impairment that the NDIA has accepted meets the disability and/or early intervention requirements (these requirements are set out in sections 24 and 25 of the NDIS Act – [see our FAQ-NDIS Access Fact sheet for more information](#)).

It is therefore important to explain to the NDIA how each support you are requesting is needed because of an impairment which the NDIA already has accepted meets the disability and/or early intervention requirements (even if you need the supports due to other reasons as well).

If you have multiple impairments, some of which have not been accepted by the NDIA, it may be difficult to differentiate why you need the support. However, if you can show a qualifying impairment contributes, at least in part, to your need for the support, this will be sufficient (this was decided by the Federal Court in the case of [NDIA v Eastham \[2026\]](#)).

If you need the support because of another impairment and the NDIA have not yet agreed that impairment meets the disability and/or early intervention requirements, you will need to provide the NDIA with additional evidence to demonstrate the impairment meets these requirements so the support can be funded. See our [Documents to Help you Access the NDIS Fact sheet](#) for more information.

What is value for money?

The NDIA must consider whether the cost of a support is reasonable, taking into account its benefits.

Value for money does not mean that a support must be the cheapest option. A support will be value for money if there are no comparable supports that would achieve the same outcome at a substantially lower cost. This means that if there are two supports which both have a similar benefit but one is significantly more expensive, the NDIA should only fund the lower cost support.



More expensive supports may be value for money if they are more beneficial so it is generally helpful to provide cost benefit comparisons with alternative less-expensive supports. The Tribunal has made some decisions which help us understand 'value for money':

- In the case of [PPFQ and NDIA \[2019\]](#), the Tribunal approved funding for more expensive hearing aids after the participant provided evidence of the additional benefits of the hearing aids to them.
- A participant won't always need to cost every alternative support. In [Mazy and NDIA \[2018\]](#), the Tribunal noted "it should not fall to the participant to fully explore alternative supports which may be less expensive".

See rule 3.1 of the [Supports for Participants Rules](#) for more detail about the value for money criterion.

What is effective and beneficial?

The NDIA can only fund supports that have been proven to be both:

- Effective (it will do what it is intended to do).
- Beneficial (it will help a participant to maintain or improve their function).

Evidence that can help demonstrate a support is effective and beneficial includes:

- medical journal articles about the effectiveness of the requested support.
- professional reports.
- statements by participants and/or their carers about the benefits experienced by, and/or expected for, the participant.

For example, in [SCHW and NDIA \[2021\]](#) where the participant sought funding for an assistance dog. The Tribunal considered academic articles about the benefits of assistance dogs for people with psychiatric conditions and evidence of the Applicant's treating professionals.



The Tribunal found that the assistance dog was effective and beneficial, taking into account this evidence.

See rule 3.2-3.3 of the [Supports for Participants Rules](#) for more detail about the effective and beneficial criterion.

What is reasonable to expect of family, carers and other supports?

To determine what is reasonable to expect from the family, friends and other unpaid supporters of a person with disability, the NDIA must consider the risks to the person with disability and their supporters, . the intensity and type of support required and whether it is age and gender appropriate for the family member or carer to be providing that support.

Parents are expected to provide substantial care and support for their children; however, if a child's needs are substantially greater than their peers because of the child's disability, it is not reasonable to expect parents to meet all these needs. For this reason, it is generally important for carers to provide a detailed statement setting out what help they provide, and any difficulties they experience in being relied on to provide that support.

- For example, in [JQJT and NDIA \[2016\]](#) the Tribunal approved funding for transport to take the child participant to and from respite, despite transport generally being a parental responsibility, as not doing so would reduce the benefit of the respite support already funded.
- However, transport to school may not always be funded, as the Tribunal decided in [NLXY and NDIA \[2024\]](#) where it was decided it would be the 'general expectation of the Australian community that families bear the responsibility and cost of transporting their children to and from school, being an everyday transport requirement.'

See rule 3.4 of the [Supports for Participants Rules](#) for more detail about the reasonable expectations criterion.



What is a NDIS Support?

A NDIS support is a support that is:

- not an excluded support, such as a day-to-day living expense or standard household item; and
- most appropriately funded by the NDIS.

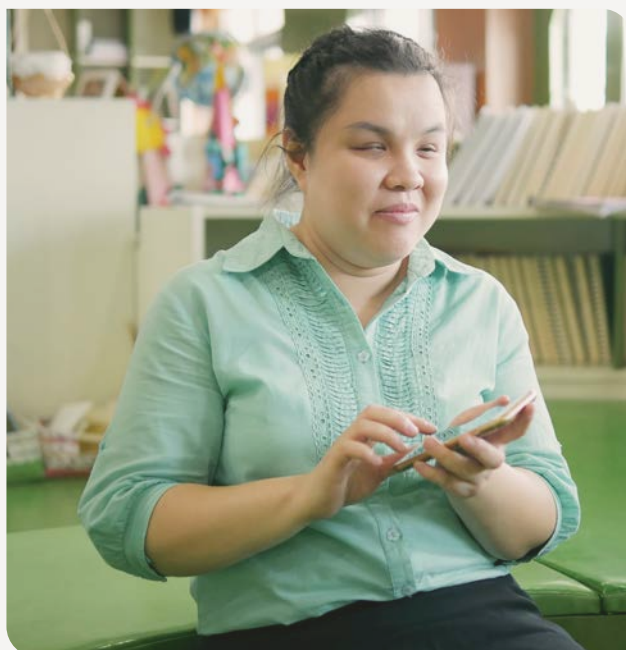
[Schedule 1 of the Transitional Supports Rules](#) lists supports that are NDIS Supports. [Schedule 2](#) lists supports that are not NDIS supports (excluded supports).

In rare cases, the NDIA may approve funding for an excluded support, if the support can replace a currently funded NDIS support and provide the same or greater benefit to the participant at no extra cost.

The Transitional Supports Rules will eventually be replaced by permanent rules once negotiated by Commonwealth, state and territory governments. In the meantime, the NDIA (and Tribunal) must apply these rules strictly.

The following cases demonstrate how the Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 lists are applied, and how supports that may previously have been approved as reasonable and necessary are now excluded:

- In [VPYC and NDIA \[2025\]](#) the Tribunal refused a request for a weighted blanket for a 15-year-old with emotional dysregulation, because the blanket was considered to fall within the category of 'day-to-day living costs - accommodation and household' in Schedule 2 of the Transitional Supports Rules.
- However, in [Dudgeon and NDIA \[2024\]](#) the Tribunal approved funding for home modifications, such as tiling, waterproofing and plastering and rejected the notion that these costs were 'day-to-day living costs – accommodation and household'.
- In [WVGM and NDIA \[2025\]](#), the tribunal rejected a request for funding for an air-conditioner in a social housing unit, preferring the conclusion that the air-conditioner was a standard household appliance and housing and community infrastructure, both categories of items that are excluded by sch 2 rather than a home modification, which is an NDIS support in sch 1.



When will a support be most appropriately funded by the NDIS?

The NDIA cannot fund a support if it is more appropriate for another mainstream system, like health or education, to provide the support. For example, the NDIS will not be responsible for funding the diagnosis and treatment of a participant's health conditions by an allied health practitioner but may fund allied health therapy where that therapy is needed to help a person with disability participate in their community.

Mainstream systems are also required by disability discrimination law to make adjustments for a person with disability and the NDIS will not be responsible for funding supports when the mainstream system should instead adjust their services to meet the needs of a person with disability. For example, schooling is generally the responsibility of the State Education system and that system has an obligation to make reasonable adjustments for a student with disability.

See [Schedule 1 of the Supports for Participants Rules](#) and the [Transitional Support Rules](#) for more detail about the supports the NDIS is generally responsible for funding and not funding in various areas, including health, education, employment, housing and infrastructure, early childhood development, child protection and family support, and justice.

What if the NDIA offer to pay for part of the support and ask me to contribute to the cost?

Generally, once you have demonstrated that a support meets the reasonable and necessary support criteria, it should be fully funded by the NDIS.

- In [McGarrigle v National Disability Insurance Agency \[2017\] FCA 308](#) the NDIA offered to pay only a portion of the participant's requested transport costs, but the Federal Court said this support should be "wholly or fully funded."



However, this issue may be more complicated where a certain expense is a day-to-day living cost but is more expensive because of a person's disability. For example, extra-curricular activities are an expense that may be incurred for all children. However, where the cost of the activity is more expensive due to a child's disability, (e.g. where a child must have individual lessons rather than group sessions as a result of their disability) the NDIA may fund the gap.

- In [PMCP and National Disability Insurance Agency \[2022\] AATA 1062](#) at [40] the Tribunal approved funding the difference between group music lessons and private music lessons required as a result of the participant's disability.

About the Tribunal cases mentioned in this fact sheet

Case references are included to help you understand how the law (the criteria and rules) is applied. Each case is determined based on the participant's circumstances and available evidence. Although it may help you to refer to these cases, the NDIA and Tribunal are not required to follow them. Only Federal Court cases create legal precedents that must be followed.

Where can I get help with NDIS access?

Ask Izzy

You can find an advocate using Ask Izzy's disability advocacy finder.

 askizzy.org.au

Legal Aid

You can seek advice from a Legal Aid lawyer if you have an appeal at the AAT.

 [1300 65 11 88](tel:1300651188)  legalaid.qld.gov.au

Our NDIS service at QAI

Our NDIS Support Service gives advice to people on reviews and appeals of NDIA decisions.

 [1300 130 582](tel:1300130582)  qai@qai.org.au  qai.org.au

This fact sheet has been written by Queensland Advocacy for Inclusion (QAI), an independent, community-based systems and advocacy organisation for people with disability in Queensland. This publication is for general information only. It must not be relied on as legal advice. Please seek legal advice about your own particular circumstances.