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Three Years in the Making

Here at EBL, we continue to work on our Plan Management service offering. This is something we started work on over three years ago to ensure we were ready and able to support you through the NDIS.

The groundwork for EBL's Plan Management service has been built up over the past three years, starting with humble beginnings with only a handful of clients, to building to the current service level exceeding hundreds of participants. The EBL Plan Management team is now capable of efficiently assisting these and many more families with their NDIS plans, providing much needed value towards utilising their NDIS funds appropriately.

In the same way, we are now in the final stages of pulling together our ChildWise Quality Safeguarding Accreditation. This too has been a three-year journey and is one that fits nicely into the NDIS Safeguarding Accreditation framework which comes into effect in SA on 1 July 2018.

Essentially, the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission is a new independent body that will regulate the NDIS marketplace and support quality and safety of NDIS supports and services. The Commission will have a no wrong door approach. What this means is that no issue is out of the Commission's remit, it will help link the person or their guardian with the correct body or agency to support them. Anyone can make a complaint to the Commission.

Should you have any questions regarding Plan Management, or the Childwise Framework and Safeguarding Accreditation, please do not hesitate to contact us anytime.

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”

– Helen Keller



A Word from Wendy

Welcome to the autumn issue, we are all enjoying the shorter days and longer nights as the weather starts to cool. As always, we have remained busy since our last newsletter.

As our cover article states, the Plan Management team have been busy ramping up in readiness for the full NDIS rollout. EBL has put together a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) that appear in this edition – we hope you find this information helpful. As always, we are here to support you should you have further questions.

This edition of the EBL newsletter includes an article relating to Advocacy and what the NDIS says about it. This is an issue that has particular interest for the Carer Group, and we acknowledge that it can be a challenging topic, so we hope this article helps to clarify your questions.

We are extremely pleased to announce that the iPads purchased with EBL's recent grant win through the "Future2 Foundation Make the Difference Grants!" program have been extremely well received by those who are already using them! As the article in this edition states, "a picture says a thousand words".

In the pages to follow, we also share an article by Alana Roy who is a registered psychologist, mental health social worker, counsellor, advocate, teacher and PhD candidate. Alana kindly gave permission for EBL to share her insightful article detailing the NDIS Pathways Review. Thank you, Alana.

As always, a big thank you to the dedicated and wonderful employees who continue to support our efforts – we are so grateful for all that you do.

Wendy Warren

Chief Executive
EBL Disability Services

The Gift that Keeps on Giving

Our Chair of the EBL Foundation, Tracey Edwards, was recently interviewed by "Money and Life" to share her insights on why she believes helping charities and non-profit organisations is important within the local community and the role EBL plays in this area.

Question: *In what ways are you helping charities and not-for-profit organisations in your local community, and why do you believe it is important to do so?*

As Chair of the EBL Foundation, the work we do has a powerful social impact on some of those most vulnerable people in society who are living with severe and profound disabilities.

Furthermore, the work we do creates financial benefits through sponsorship of carer events to ensure families and caregivers can take a well-earned break from the caring role. I never realised how important this work was until I saw the impact it has.

Specifically, the Foundation sponsors people living with severe disabilities to participate in a range of recreational activities and assisted holidays that may be out of reach for many individuals.

As the Chair, I provide monetary oversight of the Foundation's investments and expenditure. The Foundation continues to diversify its portfolio, with a current project underway involving key partners who are establishing specialised disability housing.

The disability housing project will showcase a range of innovative building design features and integrated assistive technologies aimed at improving the access and independence of those clients who utilise the building.



Tracey Edwards

Chair of the EBL
Foundation

EBL Carer Advisory Group



In mid-March, we enjoyed a great morning tea with the carers at the EBL office. After many years of not having this event, the Carers Advisory Group decided we would like to try again. We had carers who have been clients of EBL for many years as well as some new families who are using EBL's services for the first time since completing their NDIS plans. We were able to discuss NDIS experiences and share common problems about our children. A new

client expressed how grateful she was to have feedback from the "My Weekend at Yarnbrook Cottages" booklet completed by staff on her son's stay in respite. If you have a child with limited speech, it is so nice to get feedback on where they have been, what activities they were involved in, what they had to eat and to hear if staff made sure they cleaned their teeth. You feel reassured that they were well looked after, but more importantly, we can talk to them about their weekend, ask questions and hopefully get some feedback from them also. We had a positive response concerning further morning tea gatherings. We will schedule two more for this year, and you will receive an invitation by

mail. Please consider attending. We welcome any feedback you may have about how these morning teas can provide the most value possible. As always, we are here to discuss any concerns and ideas you may have to improve our service.

Dawn Brodie

Convenor
EBL Carers Advisory Group

Ready to Boogie? Come Along to the Ron Clarke Disabled Disco!

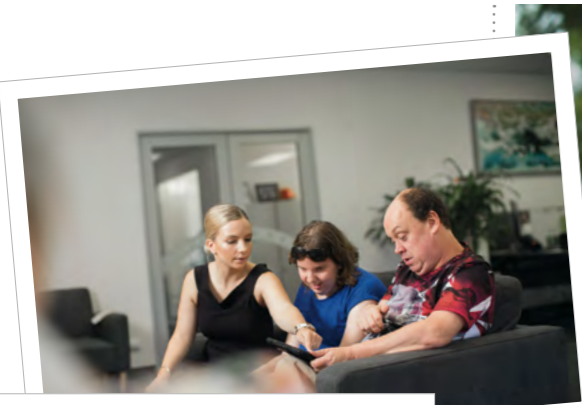
The Ron Clarke Disabled Disco has been running for over 20 years. With anywhere between 25-40 people in attendance, the night is run by volunteers on the first and third Friday of every month (except January and February).

There is a free sausage sizzle every other disco, not to mention a free supper and drinks in July and December. Father Christmas stops by to hand out presents at Christmas, and there is lots of fun to be had, door prizes to be won and prizes for dancing!

Birthdays are also recognised each month with a little present and clients must be over 16 years old to attend.

For more information about the Ron Clarke Disabled Disco, contact Phillip on **8250 1763**.





A Picture Says a Thousand Words

We are extremely pleased to announce that the iPads purchased with EBL's recent grant win through the "Future2 Foundation Make the Difference Grants!" program have been incredibly well received by those who are already using them!

As they say, "a picture says a thousand words", and these pictures certainly demonstrate how grateful these clients are to be using the new assistive technology.

These tools not only allow a non-verbal person to clearly articulate when they are bored, hungry, upset, or happy, it also sees a dramatic improvement in their life.



Plan Management: Frequently Asked Questions

Understanding the NDIS and managing your plan can sometimes be hard and confusing. At EBL, we can help.

To follow are some of the most frequently asked questions when it comes to Plan Management. Of course, should you have any further questions, please contact us on 8252 1000.

Why do I need Plan Management?

Being plan managed relieves the stress that can be associated with claiming payments through the NDIS MyPlace Portal and managing invoices, giving you the flexibility to use service providers who are both registered and not registered with the NDIS.

How do my invoices get paid?

Each EBL Plan Management client is given their own email address that links straight into our finances system. Clients can then email their invoices straight to that email address or get their service provider to do it for them, and we take care of the rest. Alternatively, invoices can be posted or dropped off at our offices.

We then claim the money from the NDIS and pay the provider or reimburse the client.

The email address is managed by EBL and emails can only be received by each client's email address.

How can I keep control of my NDIS money?

We provide you with a monthly budget statement of your plan managed NDIS funding.

How can I become plan managed?

In most cases, you need to ask to be plan managed in your initial planning meeting with the NDIS or LAC (Local Area Coordinator). The category Improved Life Choices is then added to your plan with funding to cover all plan management fees. If you are looking at your plan from the NDIS portal, it will show as CB Choice & Control. If you already have a plan and you want it to be changed to plan managed, you will need to request a review or wait until you come up for review with your next plan.

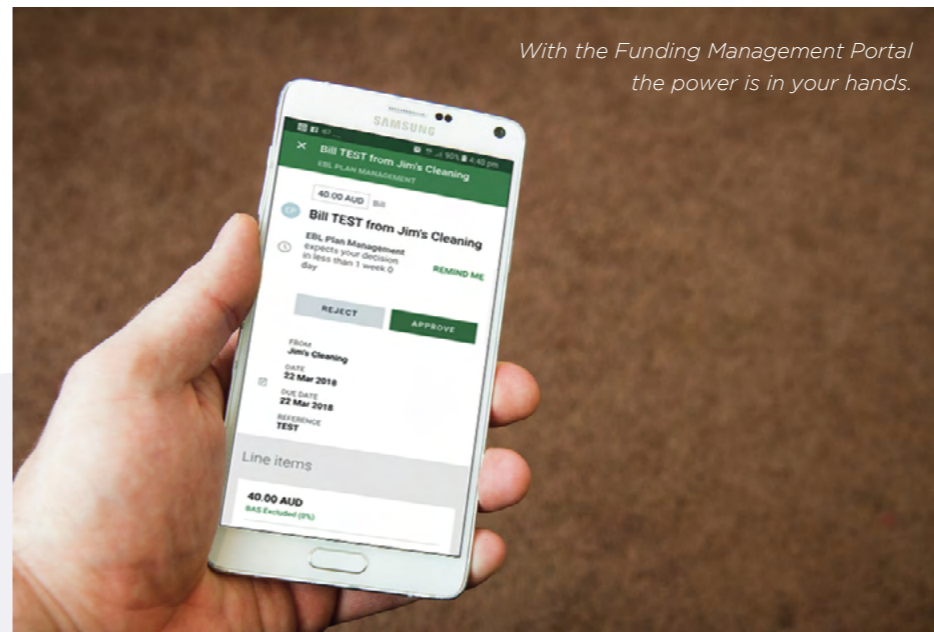
What providers can I use?

Being plan managed gives you the flexibility to use service providers who are both registered and not

registered with the NDIS. As well as online stores for items like assistive technology so you don't need to pay out of pocket first and be reimbursed.

What do the Providers need to include on their invoices for ease of payment?

- ABN number
- A unique Invoice number
- The NDIS participant's name and NDIS number
- The date your service was provided
- A detailed description of service provided
- Hourly rate charged (if appropriate)
- Your company's contact details
- Banking details



With the Funding Management Portal the power is in your hands.

The Importance of Advocacy

The information provided here is only basic information. Working out how to apply it to your circumstances can be complex, because everyone's situation is different. It is important to obtain further information and advice from an advocate if you find yourself in a position of needing to make a complaint or pursue your rights on anything covered by this Fact Sheet.

1. What the NDIS says about advocacy:

The Principles of the NDIS Act recognise that advocacy is important. The Agency acknowledges that there are different ways in which you can use advocacy.

The importance of advocacy is recognised in the General Principles set out in Section 4 of the NDIS Act. Here, the Act acknowledges and respects the role of advocacy in:

- Promoting independence and social and economic participation;
- Promoting choice and control in the pursuit of goals and the planning and delivery of supports;
- Maximising independent lifestyles and full inclusion in the mainstream community.

The National Disability Insurance Agency is required by law to recognise your right to be supported by an advocate. The Agency appears to acknowledge three main types of advocacy in relation to the NDIS:

- The role of the Agency's own local area coordinators in advocating for your right to be included in the mainstream supports and services of the community;
- The role of independent advocacy organisations to assist you to have Agency decisions reviewed;
- The role of local area coordinators, and the Agency nationally, to advocate for systemic change towards a more inclusive community.

2. Advocacy and your rights:

You are entitled to have an advocate support you in anything related to the NDIS. You have a right to choose your advocate. You don't have to limit your choice to the advocacy organisations that the NDIA tells you about.

While all of the forms of advocacy that the NDIA currently acknowledges are important, they are by no means the only ways in which advocacy can be provided, nor are they the only forms of advocacy you might need in relation to the NDIS.

Here are some things worth keeping in mind about your entitlement to advocacy:

- An advocate's role is to represent your rights. Different advocates work in different ways, but their job should always include listening to what you have to say, and making sure that you are the focus. An advocate can give you some advice on how best to have your rights respected, they can help you work out what to say at meetings, or can even speak for you at meetings if you want them to. If you are not happy with what your advocate is doing, or if you feel they are not listening to you properly, you can talk about this with your advocate or even go to another advocacy service and ask for someone else to be your advocate.
- While Agency staff members, like all service providers, have a responsibility to advocate for you, there will be limits to how far they are able to do this, especially as their main job is to help organise your plan, rather than to be your

advocate. This means you may from time to time want advocacy from someone more independent and whose sole job is to represent your interests.

- While some advocacy organisations have been funded specifically to assist people in getting Agency decisions reviewed, you do not have to get your advocacy from those organisations if there is someone else you would prefer to assist you.
- Independent advocacy is not usually funded as part of your NDIS plan. However, there are many advocacy organisations that receive some funding from other government programs and can therefore provide you with free advocacy. Community Legal Centres and disability advocacy organisations are usually free. If you want help from a private lawyer this may cost a lot of money; however, you may be eligible for Legal Aid. It is always a good idea to first check with a Community Legal Centre or a disability advocacy organisation to find out just what options you have in getting legal advice if you need it.

If you need more advice or help on the issues covered in this Fact Sheet, talk to an advocate. Some places you can go for advocacy can be found here:

www.ndisrights.org.au/links/

For more information about how the NDIS works, including on issues covered in this article, head to:

www.advokit.org.au/

Source: www.ndisrights.org.au/fact-sheet/advocacy/



The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) has been beset with problems since its roll out in 2016. Anyone who pays the slightest attention to the news has no doubt seen the stories of some participants being unhappy with the system for a variety of reasons. Ultimately, the NDIS has sometimes failed to live up to the expectations of participants and providers alike and, although the premise behind the NDIS is sound, the implementation has been shaky for many involved in the Scheme.

However, somewhat surprisingly given we're talking about a government agency, the NDIA has actually listened to the complaints of the participants and providers. Late last month they released a Pathways Review in which they addressed some of the major flaws in the way the Scheme has been implemented, and outlined their planned changes to streamline processes and iron out some of the issues that have been fed back to the Agency. This is a refreshing and very welcome change.

The term NDIS Pathways refers to the way that participants, their families and their carers, and providers interact with the Scheme and the NDIA. A review of this process was announced in April 2017 and, after interviewing over 300 participants, providers and stakeholders, the NDIA has released the findings and outlined a much-needed update to the NDIS Pathways system.

NDIS Pathways Review Explained

Recently the National Disability Insurance Agency released the findings of its review into the NDIS Pathways system.

NDIS Pathways for Participants

NDIS participants had a number of concerns, primarily:

- Phone meetings (as opposed to face-to-face)
- NDIS representatives having limited understanding of specific disabilities
- Inaccessible communications (such as the Portal only being in English, or letters sent to participants with vision impairments)
- Inconsistency
- Not feeling engaged in the process of developing their plans
- Lack of understanding from LACs and NDIA staff about their individual needs
- Having to retell their story multiple times to different staff members
- Not receiving appropriate information
- Not enough consideration of government and community supports in their plans

Furthermore, it was determined that a one size fits all approach was not working, and instead a number of different Pathways are being developed for: children under 6 years of age, Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal participants, people from remote communities, people with complex needs, people with psychosocial disabilities, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Key Features of the New Participant Pathway

The new Participant Pathway will have a focus on:

- **Face-to-face engagement during the planning process**, unless the participant chooses specifically to do this over the phone. The idea is that during the planning meeting the plan will be created and approved, which means that participants will no longer have to wait for approval of their plan.
- **A consistent point of contact** who will play a key role in empowering participants to achieve their identified outcomes.
- **A stronger focus on a broader system of support**, including improved interactions with other government services such as health, education and transport to promote greater inclusion and sense of community for people with disabilities.
- **Communication with emphasis on the objectives of the NDIS**, with a clear focus on outcomes and goals during planning sessions.
- **Information that is clear, consistent and available in accessible formats**, such as Easy English, Braille, and languages other than English.
- **Make systems interactions as smooth as possible** including a more user-friendly portal, and improved resources and tools.

(Continued on next page)

NDIS Pathways Review Explained (cont'd)

NDIS Pathways for Providers

The Review didn't just look at the issues of participants; it also evaluated and addressed the problems of providers, although many of the problems providers reported stemmed initially from the issues on the participant side.

NDIS providers reported that they wanted:

- More consistent information on policies and guidelines
- To be able to resolve issues more easily
- A reduction in the administrative burden of using the portal
- Greater ease in claiming payments
- A more straightforward registration process
- Help to connect with participants who may require their services
- To be notified when important changes occur

Key Features of the New Provider Pathway

The new provider Pathway will focus on:

- **Clear policies** with coherent and consistent information for providers, including a new website with up-to-date information and an area with frequently asked questions.
- **Better payment process** including improved and more efficient administrative approach to bulk payment requests, clearer processes for resolving payment errors, and ability to generate more useful business reporting from the portal.

- **Reducing the administrative burden of using the provider portal**

by improving error messages and notifications, enabling call centre staff to see the provider portal, and creating a smoother transaction between participant and provider within the portal.

- **Making registering as a provider easier**

by providing clear communication on the process of transition to the National Quality and Safeguards Commission as the new registrar for providers, and support to operating within the Scheme.

- **Improving the Provider Finder**

which will be augmented with business intelligence, and creating an online marketplace for providers and participants to interact in.

- **Notifying providers when significant changes are going to occur**

giving them time to adapt and prepare.

The new NDIS Pathways are going to be trialed and tested over the coming months, before being rolled out across the country. During this trial period, the NDIA will continue to liaise with those involved in the Scheme to ensure all feedback is taken into consideration. What is and is not working will be looked at closely, and improvements will be made where necessary.

NDIS Pathway Review Could Represent Real Change

Despite the initial problems with the NDIS, with the NDIS Pathways review and update, real change could well occur. The solutions the NDIA have outlined have been suggested by participants, providers and other stakeholders and as such their implementation could significantly improve the NDIS experience for everyone involved. Of course, its the implementation itself that will be key here; the solutions are meaningless without the systems in place to enact them. However, this review really does give hope to participants who are using the Scheme that their situation will improve and they will be better off than ever before.

Source: www.thesignsofthelife.com.au/ndis-pathways-review-explained/

Thank you to Alana Roy who published this post on her website on March 6, 2018.

Contact details

t (08) 8252 1000 **f** (08) 8255 1066
w ebldisabilityservices.org.au

e admin@eblds.com.au

EBL Disability Services

Endeavour House, Module 5,
11 – 15 Fourth Avenue,
Mawson Lakes SA 5095