

# Health & NDIS: Interface in the age of COVID-19

**Steven Davison** - Director, Social Policy Implementation  
NSW Health

**Dr Caroline Sharpe** - Medical Advisor, Office of the Chief Health Officer, NSW Health





**Richelle Arnott** – Director, Service Delivery & Performance – NSW & ACT, NDIA

**Susan Jennings** – Director National Delivery – NSW & ACT, NDIA

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# Update on Disability Resources

- The **Department of Social Services (DSS)** has published  Easy Read resources for people with disability and their supporters about COVID-19 on their website - <https://www.ass.gov.au/disability-and-carers/information-and-referrals-for-people-with-disability-and-their-supporters-about-coronavirus-covid-19>
- **DSS** have also established the Disability Information Helpline which provides information and referrals for people with disability, carers, support staff and service providers who need help because of coronavirus (COVID-19) –   
**1800 643 787**
- **People with Disability Australia** have established a COVID-19 Hub that provides information and resources - <https://pwd.org.au/covid-19-hub/> 
- The **World Health Organization (WHO)** has published a policy document called *Disability considerations during the COVID-19 outbreak* - <https://www.who.int/who-documents-detail/disability-considerations-during-the-covid-19-outbreak> 

# Telehealth and People with Disability

- To provide continued access to essential primary health services during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commonwealth Government is **expanding Medicare-subsidised telehealth services** for all Australians.
- The Commonwealth is also providing **extra incentives to general practitioners** and other health practitioners. A factsheet is available via the Department of Health website – [https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/04/covid-19-national-health-plan-primary-care-package-mbs-telehealth-services-and-increased-practice-incentive-payments-covid-19-national-health-plan-primary-care-package-mbs-telehealth-services-and-increased-practice-incenti\\_0.pdf](https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/04/covid-19-national-health-plan-primary-care-package-mbs-telehealth-services-and-increased-practice-incentive-payments-covid-19-national-health-plan-primary-care-package-mbs-telehealth-services-and-increased-practice-incenti_0.pdf)
- Telehealth is **available to people with disability** in the same way as it is available to all Australians.
- When providing a service using telehealth, with agreement from the participant, **providers can submit payment requests** using the support line items that they would normally use to provide face-to-face services. This includes for **assessments, reviews and participant education** - <https://www.ndis.gov.au/coronavirus/providers-coronavirus-covid-19/connecting-and-helping-participants>



# Access to Assistive Technology (AT) by NDIS Participants

- Participants who require it will have funding for AT included in their plan based on reasonable and necessary guidelines. **Supports costing up to:**
  - **\$1500 - do not require prescription** and can be purchased directly by the participant. The NDIA website states that “low cost, low risk AT under \$1,500 could be purchased without further assessment, quotes or approvals once approved as reasonable and necessary in a participant’s plan” (<https://www.ndis.gov.au/news/1657-simpler-process-improve-ndis-assistive-technology>)
  - **\$5000 - require an OT prescription but** no lengthy report or quote.
- If AT is required and not already in a participant’s plan, then **a light touch review can be arranged** by contacting the NDIA on 1800 800 110 and requesting same.

# Access to Assistive Technology (AT) by NDIS Participants

- The Commonwealth Department of Health has stated that “... Measures such as **phone or video calls must be accessible to all residents** to enable more regular communication with family members. Family and friends should be encouraged to maintain contact with residents by phone and other social communication apps, as appropriate.” (<https://www.health.gov.au/news/australian-health-protection-principal-committee-ahppc-coronavirus-covid-19-statement-on-17-march-2020-0>).
- Participants have the **flexibility to use their funding as they wish**. If, in the current crisis, a participant is now **accessing services online, then purchase of AT would - prima facie - be reasonable**. Services that may now be delivered online instead of face-to-face include telehealth consultations, OT services, instruction on exercise or training, virtual day programs, behaviour management support, social and community participation etc.

# Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – how and when to use

- The **NSW Health Clinical Excellence Commission** has posted  PPE training videos - <http://www.cec.health.nsw.gov.au/keep-patients-safe/COVID-19/Personal-Protective-Equipment-PPE/covid-19-training-videos>
- The **Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC)** has endorsed  the following recommendations for (non-inpatient) care of people at risk of, or with suspected or confirmed, COVID-19 including the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) - <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/04/revised-advice-on-non-inpatient-care-of-people-with-suspected-or-confirmed-covid-19-including-use-of-personal-protective-equipment-ppe-interim-advice-on-non-inpatient-care-of-persons-with-suspected-or-confirmed-coronavirus.pdf>

# Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) - the National Medical Stockpile

- If NDIS service providers or self-managing participants need access to PPE, the [NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission factsheet](#) is advising them to email the National Medical Stockpile at [NDISCOVIDPPE@health.gov.au](mailto:NDISCOVIDPPE@health.gov.au).
- The NDIA has advised (<https://www.ndis.gov.au/coronavirus/providers-coronavirus-covid-19/connecting-and-helping-participants>) that the Commonwealth Department of Health will be triaging requests. Providers will need to demonstrate:
  - They have not been able to source masks on the open market
  - Existing stocks have been depleted
  - Who will be using the masks
  - How masks will be prioritised and distributed to minimise transmission
  - How previous stockpile supplies (if applicable) have been used efficiently and effectively.
- Requests will be prioritised where:
  - the participant has a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19
  - safe care cannot be provided without PPE; or
  - where there is a clinical need.

# NDIS FAQs



The NDIA has a Q&A page for providers that now provides additional helpful information about practical issues associated with service delivery during the COVID-19 response.

- <https://www.ndis.gov.au/coronavirus/participants-coronavirus-covid-19/support-workers-and-you>





# Contacts

- **National Coronavirus Helpline**
  - If you are sick and think you have symptoms of COVID-19, seek medical advice. If you want to talk to someone about your symptoms, call the National Coronavirus Helpline for advice. The line operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week - [1800 020 080](tel:1800020080).
- **Medical assistance**
  - You can access other medical assistance from your GP or hospital emergency department (ED) or by calling **healthdirect** on **1800 022 222** or visit at <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/>.
  - If you have a medical emergency call 000.
- **NSW Ministry of Health**
  - Email questions to the MOH-NDIS Inbox - [MOH-NDIS@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:MOH-NDIS@health.nsw.gov.au).
- **NDIA**
  - Phone **1800 800 110**, contact your Local Area Coordinator or visit <https://www.ndis.gov.au/coronavirus>.
- **NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission**
  - Phone **1800 035 544** or visit the website at <https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/>.