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## **Glenda and John share their experiences and tips from two years of their daughter's planning meetings with the NDIA**

### **Our Planning Experiences with NDIS**

We wish to share with everyone our recent experiences with the NDIS support approach. With our daughter Amy, who has lived happily at Watson Place for the last nine years, we have now participated in two separate annual NDIS planning sessions. We found both planning meetings to be a positive experience and certainly of value in meeting our daughter Amy's immediate and future needs.

#### **1. Preparation for the planning meeting**

To maximise the value of the planning meetings we felt it was important to spend considerable time preparing for the planning session. Initially we found it very useful to go to a number of NDIS presentations in both Mandurah and Perth to gain as much information as possible about the NDIS scheme. We also talked to other parents/guardians and professionals about how we should prepare for the planning meeting combined with finding out about any challenges we might face during the planning session – this was very valuable and we would certainly recommend you do this well before the planning meeting date.

We believe that families are the experts in knowing the needs of their family member and therefore they are best placed to know what is important for their son/daughter's immediate and future life.

In preparation for the planning meeting we also gathered as much information as we could about our daughter that related to her current abilities and needs, including recent assessments that focused on her current and future daily living needs. We also thought it was a good idea to prepare a written list of the support that she is currently receiving combined with any new support we felt she now needed. In support of this task it is also beneficial to ask the WA Blue Sky team to assist with a pre-planning meeting checklist.

Just prior to attending the planning meeting we were absolutely clear on what goals we wanted to achieve for our daughter and what we hoped to achieve through the planning meeting.



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## **2. Participating in the planning meeting**

When involved in the actual planning meeting it is essential to demonstrate confidence in how the plan should be shaped. Also, if you do not understand the meeting process or if you are not clear about what is being said then it is important to insist on having a satisfactory explanation. If there is something you consider vital as a planning goal then you should stand your ground and don't be rushed into accepting a goal or plan if it is not exactly what you were seeking. We think it is good practice to use the current NDIS terminology of why the proposed support is "reasonable" and "necessary" - don't be afraid to use these words from time to time during the meeting.

It is essential to have other people support you as parents during the planning meeting particularly people who really have a good understanding of your family member's needs in the supported setting. For us we were successfully supported by Sue Hall, the Watson Place team leader and Lisa Eastwood, WABS Service Coordinator. To assist us with our advocacy during the meetings we were fortunate to have people who had a very good understanding of the NDIS process and rules. At Amy's 2017 planning meeting we appreciated the support during the meeting from Lauren O'Connor, WABS Development and Quality Manager, and then last year we were delighted to have WABS CEO Frances Buchanan attend and support us during Amy's most recent planning meeting.

## **3. Follow-up after the NDIS meeting**

We found that the planning and decision-making does not necessarily end at the conclusion of the planning meeting. Several days after our daughter's most recent planning meeting we felt the need to contact our NDIA Planner as we were not happy with the funding that was allocated to support one part of our daughter's plan. We think that this is one of the most important parts of the planning process - that is if you are not satisfied with the outcome of the planning meeting or the actual funding allocation then you should contact the NDIA Planner as soon as possible.

As a result of contacting the NDIA Planner we were fortunate with the support of the WA Blue Sky team to have one of Amy's goals re-worked to include additional ideas and opportunities for her to access the community – which resulted in an increase in the funding for this part of the plan. It is important to remember that at any stage after the planning meeting if you are not entirely happy with the outcome or if circumstances change you can ask for a review – rather than waiting for the next meeting which will be twelve months away.



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Although it requires a lot of time and energy we have been delighted with the NDIS approach for supporting people with disabilities. Most importantly the focus has definitely shifted from looking at support organisations which might be best suited for our daughter Amy – to a focus on our daughter Amy's needs and how we go about meeting these needs. We hope that your family member will also benefit from the NDIS planning process enabling them to experience a full and purposeful life.

Glenda and John