

NDIS access requirements for people with hearing disability

Deafness Forum was contacted by people who were confused by information on the NDIS website and in social media about the eligibility of people with hearing loss and deafness to join the National Disability Scheme.

The NDIS website (<https://www.ndis.gov.au/operational-guideline/access/list-a.html>) has a list of disability conditions (including hearing impairment of 90 decibels and more in the better ear) that make a person eligible for the NDIS without the need to prove the impacts of the disability on their lives – and they won't have to go through the process again in the future. Section 24 Disability Access does not apply to them. Therefore, people with a permanent hearing impairment of greater than 90 decibels in the better ear (pure tone average of 500Hz, 1000Hz, 2000Hz and 4000Hz) do not need to demonstrate they have substantially reduced functional capacity to meet the NDIS access eligibility requirements. They meet the disability requirements in section 24 of the NDIS Act without further assessment required.

Public confusion arose in comparing this information with what was stated in the NDIS operational guidelines (section 8.3.3). This says that a person with a permanent hearing impairment of greater than 65 decibels in the better ear (pure tone average of 500Hz, 1000Hz, 2000Hz and 4000Hz) may have substantially reduced functional capacity. These people will probably be eligible to join the NDIS, but they must provide evidence that the disability results in substantially reduced functional capacity to undertake one or more of the following activities - communication, social interaction, learning, mobility, self-care or self-management.

A prospective NDIS participant must meet all the NDIS Act 2013 section 24 Disability Access eligibility criteria or section 25 Early Intervention criteria to become an eligible participant. To meet section 24 Disability Access, a person must demonstrate they have an impairment that results in substantially reduced functional capacity to undertake one or more of the following activities: communication, social interaction, learning, mobility, self-care or self-management.

Key points

- Children and young adults under 26 years of age who receive services under the Australian Government Hearing Services Community Service Obligations Program, will qualify for the NDIS.
- People who are 26 years and older with a permanent hearing impairment of greater than 90 decibels in the better ear (pure tone average of 500Hz, 1000Hz, 2000Hz and 4000Hz) are eligible to join the NDIS without the need to prove that their disability has substantially reduced their functional capacity.
- People who are 26 years and older with a permanent hearing impairment of greater than 65 decibels in the better ear will probably be eligible to join the NDIS, but they must provide evidence that the disability results in substantially reduced functional capacity.

- People who are 26 years and older with hearing impairment of less than 65 decibels in the better ear and who also have another disability may also be eligible.
- People who are 26 years and older and who have problems with speaking and listening may also be considered.

Deafness Forum of Australia will continue to advocate for the needs of people with hearing impairment who do not qualify for the NDIS.

This report was prepared by Deafness Forum of Australia ©2018,
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