

NDIS working together to achieve your goals

More than 250,000 Australians now receive support under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

The NDIS helps Australians under 65 with a disability build skills and participate in the community and employment. The Scheme is undoubtedly having a considerable impact on people's lives, including the approximately 78,000 people receiving support for the first time.

The effects can be seen in the Mount Alexander Shire, where the services offered by Castlemaine Health, a registered NDIS provider, are helping people realise their potential and engage with the communities where they live, work, learn and play.

Whether they're helping an infant develop communication skills, a pre-school child become more independent, a family feel stronger in their caring role or a young adult get more involved in their community, Castlemaine Health's network of allied health specialists are helping local people realise their potential.

"The service we offer is really broad and flexible," says Castlemaine Health's Rachel Fry.

"We can work with people who already have an NDIS plan but we can also help people who think they may be eligible track their path through the NDIS."

"Our team work in clinics, out in people's homes, in schools, even in the playgrounds."

The Castlemaine Health team includes a range of allied health providers, from dietitians to physiotherapists and from continence specialists to podiatrists.

Speech pathologist Deanna Blakeley works with children, helping with speaking, literacy, listening, social skills and play, as well as daily living skills such as eating and drinking.

"One of the wonderful things about the team here is the way we all work together," she says.

"For example if a young child comes to me to work on speech and communication, but I pick up an unusual pattern of crawling I'll bring one of our physiotherapists in. In the same way if a physiotherapist notices a child they are working with is not speaking very much they might get me involved."

"Being part of the hospital means we have a broad range of services and providers under the one roof and can work together to achieve the best outcomes for clients."

The team also work to support parents, carers and teachers. Helping them build their capacity and look after a child with special needs as well as making sure they have the right equipment and home modifications to help a child be independent.



Castlemaine Health speech pathologist Deanna Blakeley.

"Helping people participate in their daily activities, whether that's at home, at work, at school or in the community is a large part of what we do," says occupational therapist, Smitha Kumar.

"We help adults and children access specialised equipment like wheelchairs and scooters as well as simple aids to help them use the bathroom at home or cook dinner."

Castlemaine Health also provides a great service for younger adults. The Out & Out Club, which operates on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, has been helping young people develop social skills and connect with others for the last 25 years.

"One of the issues that young adults with a disability face is that they often get stuck at home in the evening when most other people their age are out having fun with their mates," says Out & Out Club program coordinator Rachel.

The group go on outings to local exhibitions or the local pub or catch up at their centre in Harcourt to play pool, watch movies and share food.

"It's really important that young people make connections and are treated as adults," says Rachel.

"We work to respectfully support them in their social lives with education and help them get to know other young people and build friendships."

If you or someone you care for would like to know more about NDIS services at Castlemaine Health you can call the Intake office on 5471 3575, email intake@castlemainehealth.org.au or visit www.castlemainehealth.org.au/ndis

"Even if we're not able to offer the right service we'll do our best to guide people and link them in with other specialists," says Rachel.

"There are no closed doors."



Q&A

Q: Can I change NDIS providers?

A: Once you have your NDIS plan in place it's up to you which provider you want to use. If you already have a provider, your service agreement should include a cancellation policy and details of how you or the provider may change or end the agreement.

Q: My NDIS plan has changed significantly. What can I do?

A: The NDIS is designed to increase a person's skills and independence so they can live a better life. As you work towards and achieve your goals it's likely the amount of support you need will change. For example a child may undertake intensive speech therapy to reach a goal. Once that goal has been reached this support may be better directed into something else. It can be helpful to reflect back on the goals you or your child have achieved and the things you have gained through the previous plan.

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