

discussion paper:  
volunteering  
and the  
national disability  
insurance scheme



Developed by:



Supported by:



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## executive summary

Volunteering is a vital part of the social policy model underpinning the objectives of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Through volunteering, a person with a disability can break out of the mould of a 'service user'. Volunteering provides an entry point for engagement between people with and without a disability. In addition to creating social inclusion, relationships and friendships, for some people volunteering also provides a pathway to employment, whether that be a for person to commence working in the disability sector or for a person with a disability to gain access to employment through the personal networks of supportive volunteers, such as with the assistance of a Circle of Support (for more information on Circles of Support refer to <http://www.inclusiondesignlab.org.au/what-weve-learnt/circles-of-support/>).

Volunteers also represent one of the primary mechanisms for moving people with a disability from passive recipients of service to social inclusion. As such we are concerned at the current simplistic level of debate in relation to supporting volunteering within the NDIS and the uncertainty pertaining to funding inclusive volunteering models. Through supporting and encouraging volunteering, Inclusion Melbourne and other innovative disability organisations across Australia provide significant social and financial gains for people through supporting and leveraging volunteer supporters. These initiatives have the potential to achieve greater economic and social inclusion outcomes at or below the funding levels required when utilising paid staff alone.

Failure to articulate a clear strategy, including ensuring adequate transition support for volunteer including organisations will have significant impacts on people with a disability, current and potential volunteers and those disability support organisations who have developed service models focussed on connecting and individually matching volunteers to people with a disability for the purposes of increasing social participation and decreasing social isolation; and also for those disability supporting organisations that link and support people with a disability to gain volunteer roles so as to participate more fully within our community.

## about inclusion melbourne

Inclusion Melbourne is a community support organisation that provides services to people with an intellectual disability, helping them to create more enjoyable and rewarding lives and participate fully in the community. Inclusion Melbourne was established in 1950 and remains the only registered disability support provider to have transformed its services during the life of the previous Victorian State Disability Plan (2002-2012), resulting in the sale of our premises and the delivery of all of our supports within the community, alongside community members.

Our vision at Inclusion Melbourne is for people with intellectual disability to live in an inclusive community, where everyone has the same opportunities to participate in community life and to take their place in society as respected citizens.

We believe our role as a disability support provider is to encourage and enable people with disability to achieve and maintain a valued quality of life. We accomplish this by supporting people to create highly personalised and flexible lifestyles based on their needs and desires. To accomplish this we encourage people to participate in activities and develop relationships with people within their local community.

## introduction

Three years after the launch of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), there is still much to do to identify strategies to support volunteering alongside and by people with a disability. This document outlines the goals of the NDIS, the roles and outcomes that can be achieved through volunteering and provides suggestions, concerns and recommendations about how to ensure volunteering can thrive in the NDIS and underpin approaches to building social connectedness.

## recommendations

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### Recommendation 1

That the NDIA monitor access to volunteers, particularly within regional, rural and outer suburban areas.

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### Recommendation 2:

That the NDIA clearly articulate how volunteering is to be funded, either as ILC or Tier 3 funding for people with a disability.

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### Recommendation 3:

That state & local governments consider the implications of the NDIS rollout for people with a disability, their families and the provider market without concurrent ILC sourcing in place to maintain existing social capital

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### Recommendation 4

That the NDIA implement a communication strategy to ensure that people with a disability and their families are aware of the need to discuss funding supports for the maintenance of existing volunteer supports.

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### Recommendation 5

That the NDIA implement a communication strategy to ensure that existing volunteer supporting organisations are aware of the pathways for funding to maintain existing volunteer supports for people with a disability.

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### Recommendation 6

That sourcing for ILC activities should distinguish volunteering which continues to support group based activities vs those activities designed to connect individuals leading to social inclusion.

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### Recommendation 7

That state governments conduct an audit of existing state funded volunteer supports targeted specifically towards people with a disability and their families in order to determine if the current funding envelope for ILC will reduce, maintain or expand the existing social capital.'

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### Recommendation 8

That the NDIA conduct research into models for funding establishment and maintenance of volunteering models which may include sourcing via ILC, individual funding allocations via packages or else a combination of these two approaches, with regard for:

- participants of the scheme and other Australians with a disability who will not receive a funded support package; and
  - support and assistance for volunteers to assist people with a disability as well as support and assistance for people with a disability to become volunteers.
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### Recommendation 9

That the ILC sourcing process clarifies NDIA expectations in relation to fostering improved connections between registered providers and volunteer resource centres

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### Recommendation 10

That the NDIA clarify the boundaries of ILC supports where the provision of these services intersects with quality and safeguarding frameworks

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### Recommendation 11

That the NDIA review ILC activity streams to permit the use of volunteers in ordinary life activities as a vehicle for growing connections and creating friendship, thereby achieving the objective of increasing social participation

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### Recommendation 12

That the NDIA give consideration to existing individually targeted outcomes based funding models as to their suitability in creating and driving quality volunteer supports

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### Recommendation 13

That the NDIA include specific mention of funding for volunteer connection and coordination within the price guide.

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### Recommendation 14

That the NDIA price guide acknowledges funding must be ongoing in order to meet state based quality and safeguard requirements, as well as to reduce volunteer churn through the implementation of effective oversight, supervision, training and support for volunteers.

## the national disability insurance scheme

*The National Disability Insurance Scheme (the NDIS) is a radical new way of approaching and funding disability services and supports in Australia.* Meeting Australia's obligations as a signatory to the UN Convention is also the first object of the *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013* (the NDIS Act) and is an objective of every intervention under the NDIS.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme was initially implemented in trial sites around Australia that commenced in 2013. It is now being rolled out progressively across Australia from 1 July 2016. The NDIS reforms will see the disability sector:

- Moving away from eight separate State/Territory funding schemes to one uniform, national scheme
- Changing from block funding of disability service provider organisations by governments to individualised funding for people with disabilities based on individual needs assessments
- Ditching Australia's old welfare and charity model of disability funding, replacing it with a legislatively guaranteed "insurance" model whereby all Australians who meet the eligibility criteria are legally entitled to NDIS funding for all 'necessary and reasonable' supports.

By allocating funding for disability services and supports to people with disabilities themselves rather than to service provider organisations, and by introducing individualised funding packages, the NDIS aims to ensure that Australians with disability – and their families, where relevant – enjoy far greater choice and control over all necessary services and supports.

The NDIS is based on three tiers:

- Tier 1 recognises everyone in Australia is a contributor to the scheme and may need to draw on it at some time in their lives (eg: following a catastrophic injury resulting in a lifelong disability);
- Tier 2 provides general information about support options and generic services for people who have a disability, but not at the level that a person requires daily assistance with everyday living tasks; and
- Tier 3 provides individualised planning and funding for people who require specialised supports.
- Tier 2 is now known as Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) and will be potentially accessed by millions of people.

The NDIS will provide ongoing financial support for the estimated 460,000 Australians with significant and permanent disability. This support will include, for example, funding for intensive early intervention therapy services and/or equipment, where there is good evidence such therapy and/or equipment will substantially improve or arrest a decline in functioning. If a person is eligible for a support package in the NDIS, he or she will receive funding on an annual basis to purchase the services, aids and equipment that they have been assessed as needing. People then have the choice to purchase this from any provider. As individual circumstances, condition or needs change, NDIS participants will be able to apply to have their funding plan adjusted accordingly. Additionally, participants will be able to select to self-manage their own funds, in which case they will be paid into a nominated bank account, or else ask the NDIA (the agency established to administer the NDIS) or a third party to manage the funding.

Volunteers contribute to the social inclusion of people with disabilities.



## information, linkages and capacity building

It is important to see ILC as an integral part of the NDIS. Successful implementation of ILC is key to the overall goal of the NDIS to increase opportunities for people with disability to take part in the Australian economy and society. Successful implementation of ILC is also integral to the sustainability of the scheme in the long run.

The NDIS Act outlines that the NDIA can fund people and organisations to deliver ILC activities:

“The Agency may provide assistance in the form of funding for persons or entities:

- a. for the purposes of enabling those persons or entities to assist people with disability to:
  - i) realise their potential for physical, social, emotional and intellectual development; and
  - ii. participate in social and economic life; and
- b. otherwise in the performance of the Agency’s functions”

In undertaking this role, the Agency must use its “best endeavours” to act in accordance with any relevant intergovernmental agreements as well as act in a “proper, efficient and effective manner” (Chapter 6, Part 1, Section 119). These intergovernmental agreements include such things as the bilateral agreements signed between the States and the Commonwealth; and the COAG (Council of Australian Governments) Applied Principles, which outline the responsibilities of the NDIS and mainstream service systems such as education and health.

With this backdrop, all Australian governments agreed in mid-2015 to the ILC Policy Framework. The National Disability Insurance Agency has been given responsibility for implementing the policy, which outlines two broad aims for ILC:

1. To provide information, referral and capacity building supports for people with disability, their families, and carers that are not directly tied to a person through an individually funded package.
2. To partner with local communities, mainstream and universal services to improve access and inclusion for people with disability.

This policy framework identifies five activity streams:

1. Information, linkages and referrals
2. Capacity building for mainstream services
3. Community awareness and capacity building
4. Individual capacity building
5. Local area co-ordination (LAC).

These areas of work reflect the governments’ shared view of the most effective ways of increasing the social and economic participation of people with disability. It also explains the intended scope of ILC. This is important as in the future **the Agency will only fund activities that fit into one of the five streams**. This means, for example, that ILC funding will not be provided to organisations to help people with daily living activities such as assistance with shopping or cooking because these types of activity do not fit within any of the five activity streams. *This has impacts on disability support organisations who have service models built around connecting volunteers to people with a disability for the purposes of increasing social participation and decreasing social isolation; and also for those disability supporting organisations that link and support people with a disability into voluntary roles.*

While the ILC Policy Framework identifies activity streams and funding principles, it does not explain how to implement them. Implementation will include:

- setting the priorities for funding
- establishing the expected outcomes
- working out how those outcomes might be measured.

In late 2015, the National Disability Insurance Agency released the *ILC Commissioning Framework*, a document intended to translate the policy into action and provide a basis for consultation and feedback. The Framework outlines how the Agency will fund and manage information, linkage and capacity building (ILC) activities in the future. It sets out what outcomes we expect from those activities, and how we expect those activities will be funded and delivered.

In 2011, the Productivity Commission released its report into disability care and support in Australia. In recommending the introduction of the NDIS, the Commission recognised that not everything could or should be achieved by giving people with disability greater access to individually funded packages. The Commission argued that individual and community capacity building would be needed if people with disability were going to achieve greater social and economic participation. The Commission also recognised that there would be a group of people with disability who, while not eligible for an individually funded package, might still need some form of support. It is expected that through ILC, the NDIS will provide a comprehensive information and referral service to help all Australians with any level or type of disability to access mainstream, community and – where necessary – specialist disability support services.

## who are volunteers?

Volunteers are unpaid community members, supported through a not-for-profit organisation, who contribute to the social inclusion of people with disabilities.

'Not-for-profit organisations are the vehicle through which volunteers provide a community benefit. Volunteering is distinguished from paid work' (Volunteering Australia 2006).

A distinction can be drawn between 'informal volunteering' which is what people do in their private lives to, for example, assist a neighbour, friend; versus formal volunteering, which is orchestrated through an organisation. Volunteer programs are an active and supported means to involve community members in the lives of people with disabilities. Natural or informal supports do not depend on organisations as an intermediary.

Volunteers make a significant contribution to society and the economy. Volunteers were estimated to provide a volume of work equivalent to 14 per cent of paid jobs in Victoria, with the value of volunteering across all sectors estimated at over \$16 billion to the Victorian economy. Of this, formal or organised volunteering through organisations is estimated at around 40 per cent of volunteer time, with the remainder provided through informal volunteering arrangements. Women are more likely to volunteer than men however, on average, men provide more organised volunteer hours per year.

Formal volunteering is the connection of an individual to a charity, with whom they then undertake a wide range of tasks, being careful to not displace the role of a paid worker, as per the Volunteering Australia code of conduct. As the NDIS is intended to result in wide scale market reform, it is anticipated that the number of charitable providers will decrease and this will have implications particularly in regional areas where there will be less opportunities for willing citizens to commit to volunteering with a local charitable disability support provider.

### Recommendation 1

**That commonwealth and state governments monitor access to volunteers, particularly within regional, rural and outer suburban areas.**

## advantages of volunteers for the ndis

Volunteers have potential to contribute substantially to the goal of the NDIS to increase social and economic participation of people with disabilities. Volunteers can contribute beyond what staff and family members can achieve alone. Research consistently shows that volunteers can:

- Reduce social isolation and improve mental wellbeing of vulnerable people that cannot be achieved/ in addition to, what can be achieved with paid staff or family. That is, involving volunteers in people's lives can reduce loneliness, and reduce mental health costs.
- Extend the effectiveness of formal services: both cost and impact: that is, formal funds go further – even after costs for volunteers are taken into account.
- Challenge the assumption that the only response to staff shortfalls is more paid staff about the need for workforce expansion and the predictions of workforce shortfalls.
- Strengthen the capacity of the community sector to provide informal support as/when/if volunteering relationships through a CSO translate to informal community support.
- Provide safeguards for vulnerable people though building relationships with community members (for example, Klees 2005; Montclair 2011).

## effectiveness of volunteer programs

There are examples of successful approaches which have been tried by organisations to establish and maintain volunteer supports for people who are socially isolated and lonely (Amado, 1993, Klees 2005, 2013). However there have been many unsuccessful approaches to volunteering. Paid staff can prevent or enable *people with disabilities to participate fully in community life and connecting them with other community members*' (Traustadottir 1993). Human services and organisational practices can add to loneliness (Amado 1993).

## **inclusion melbourne: a successful approach to volunteering and social inclusion**

The Inclusion Melbourne approach provides personalised support to each person with intellectual disability, furthering opportunities for employment and volunteering, learning and education and social participation. The foundation of this approach is staff who know each person with a disability very well and recruit, train and support volunteers. *Inclusion Melbourne has a track record of being more effective, that is, enabling more social participation, and more efficient, that is, achieving more with same funds than comparable approaches relying solely on paid staff.*

### **through volunteering, inclusion melbourne strives to:**

- Develop personalised supports for individualised lives
- Provide a range of support to maintain each different relationship with a community member, including support to family members (typically but not exclusively parents), the person with a disability and the volunteer
- Provide support to the relationship as long as needed by the volunteer, the person with a disability and/or his/her family. *Inclusion Melbourne recognises that the volunteer and person with a disability may choose to move on*
- Increase the amount of effective support available for each person to pursue activities, hobbies and ongoing learning while at the same time increasing the number and nature of various informal social relationships
- Make each person's resources extend to achieve a full and vibrant week – to have no more than 50% of a person's weekly support provided through paid supports
- Provide opportunities for community members to participate
- Provide volunteering opportunities for people with / without an intellectual disability
- Connect people with a disability to a community activity, interest or to pass time
- Increase awareness in the community of people with a disability

### **inclusion melbourne's volunteering program has the following objectives:**

#### *For people with disabilities, to access volunteers to:*

- Experience a more inclusive lifestyle through the development of social relationships, usually initiated through a common interest or activity or education and learning
- Have greater opportunity to be present in the wider community

- Have social relationships, including friendships with members of the community which are personalised and flexible, not based on payment. These can be enduring or task specific and are mutually beneficial, such as shared enjoyment of art or building of skills
- Have a valued role in social relationships, and not only as service recipients
- Continue to develop skills relevant for various social relationships and personal relationships, coping skills, processing emotions, strategies, problem solving
- To be contributors to various valued roles

#### *For family members (typically parents) to:*

- Recognise the importance for their son/daughter in forming attachments and involvement with community members.
- Develop trust in community members: recognise community members want to spend time with their family member
- Educate families about the value of volunteers
- Lift family horizons about what is possible in the wider community
- Know about/ recognise the role volunteers have with their family member
- Support the family and build skills and relationships for family member
- Have a 'break' as a consequence of the time spent between a volunteer and their family member

#### *For volunteers as members of the community, including people with disabilities, to:*

- Recognise the value of diverse personal relationships
- Experience opportunities and benefits of spending time with a person with an intellectual disability: to build relationships, to build community
- Be better connected in a way that increases emotional wellbeing and health, and personal development
- Contribute to meaningful and valued community work – to give back to the community
- Further progress their priorities for personal development and experiences which could contribute to education, social skills development, and employment opportunities
- Develop additional roles / opportunities beyond initial activity tasks

## providing reasonable and necessary support

Volunteering is consistent with the provision of reasonable and necessary support. For participants in the NDIS, their funded support hours can be achieved with fewer dollars while extending opportunities for social and economic participation

## current profile of inclusion melbourne

During 2014 / 15, Inclusion Melbourne...



supported  
**209**  
volunteers  
including 26 people  
with intellectual disability

worked alongside

**80**

people with  
intellectual disability



to deliver  
**20,247** HOURS

of volunteering, of which  
**2,772**

was provided  
by people with  
intellectual disability  
and **14,464** directly  
supported people with  
intellectual disability



**Cost** to operate the volunteering program



**\$186,500**

**Dollar value** of those hours  
at the current NDIS 1:1 support rate



**\$833,770**

Through supporting and encouraging volunteering, the people supported by Inclusion Melbourne gain value for money from individual funding packages and potentially achieve greater economic and social inclusion outcomes for fewer dollars. We are currently undertaking economic analysis to test this approach.



Volunteers create community. Having volunteers support people with a disability provides greater capacity and likelihood of developing a community where people are accepted and included.

## current challenges to supporting volunteers

It is yet to be determined how some current service types, such as those delivered by Inclusion Melbourne, are to be funded, or even a detailed consideration of funding models to determine whether volunteer coordination can be incorporated within an individualised funding approach. Without a clear response from the NDIA as to how volunteering will be funded, *models of support that provide social participation and community inclusion such as that offered by Inclusion Melbourne are in danger of disappearing.*

### Recommendation 2:

That the NDIA clearly articulate how volunteering is to be funded, either as ILC or Tier 3 funding for people with a disability.

Further, the pace and timing of the rollout of ILC sourcing may have a devastating effect on volunteer including organisations. Without a clear strategy to inform people with a disability and families of the current costs of State (block) funded services, as well as advising Local Area Coordinators to inquire about any volunteer supports that may be in place, organisations may find that existing clientele are ineligible for future services as they remain unaware of the need to request funding to provide for volunteer establishment and ongoing maintenance, supervision and training. In some cases, organisations may not be able to survive a gap in excess of one year before being able to tender for ILC funding to provide these services (if they are to be funded via ILC)

### Recommendation 3:

That state & local governments consider the implications of the NDIS rollout for people with a disability, their families and the provider market without concurrent ILC sourcing in place to maintain existing social capital

### Recommendation 4

That the NDIA implement a communication strategy to ensure that people with a disability and their families are aware of the need to discuss funding supports for the maintenance of existing volunteer supports.

### Recommendation 5

That the NDIA and state and local governments implement a communication strategy to ensure that existing volunteer supporting organisations are aware of the pathways for funding to maintain existing volunteer supports for people with a disability.

### Recommendation 6

That upcoming sourcing of ILC activities by the NDIA distinguish volunteering which continues to support group based activities vs those activities designed to connect individuals leading to social inclusion.

In order to provide an informed response and to gain a sense of scale, Inclusion Melbourne has worked with Extended Families Australia, Interchange and People Outdoors as disability support organisations for whom volunteers are integral to their model of service delivery.

A key activity undertaken by the group was to develop and disseminate a survey to collect data regarding the use of volunteers in directly supporting people with a disability. The survey was disseminated in late 2015, with responses due in January 2016. Utilising existing networks it was sent to a wide range of registered disability support providers across Victoria. There were 54 respondents representing 47 separate Victorian organisations, all of whom supported volunteers within their organisation. Please refer to the *Appendix* for a list of organisations that completed the survey.

## survey results

### scope of volunteering

A total of 5,175 volunteers are engaged and supported by the 47 organisations who responded to the survey. Of those volunteers, 4,073 (79%) are directly supporting people with a disability.

11,124 people with disabilities are directly supported by respondent organisation's volunteers.

Only 51% of respondents chose or were able to share the estimated number of direct support hours provided by volunteers. It is unknown if the lack of response by some organisations is a hesitation to share or a lack of data recording to provide this information. It is expected that those funded through DHHS Disability Services Community Respite should have this information on hand as it is a reporting requirement. However with only 24 organisations responding to this question, there were 370,475 hours of direct support provided in the 2014 / 2015 year. If these organisations are representative of other organisations it could mean that volunteers in Victoria are providing in excess of one million hours of direct support to people with a disability.

It is unknown how many of Victoria's 312 registered disability organisations engage volunteers in the direct support of people with a disability, although the number is likely to be significantly greater than the sample of this survey.

These results show the enormous reach of volunteers and the significant place they have in the community and the delivery of supports and services to people with a disability. Clearly volunteers form a significant part of disability service sector and consideration and effort given to maintaining the existing social capital.

### the role and focus of volunteers

Respondents to the survey reported that volunteers performed the following direct support roles:

- One on one support in the form of community access and inclusion, mentoring, friendship, and skill development work
- Leading or supporting activities such as groups, social events and camps
- Skills based volunteering (eg. counselling)

### Number of volunteers performing direct support roles

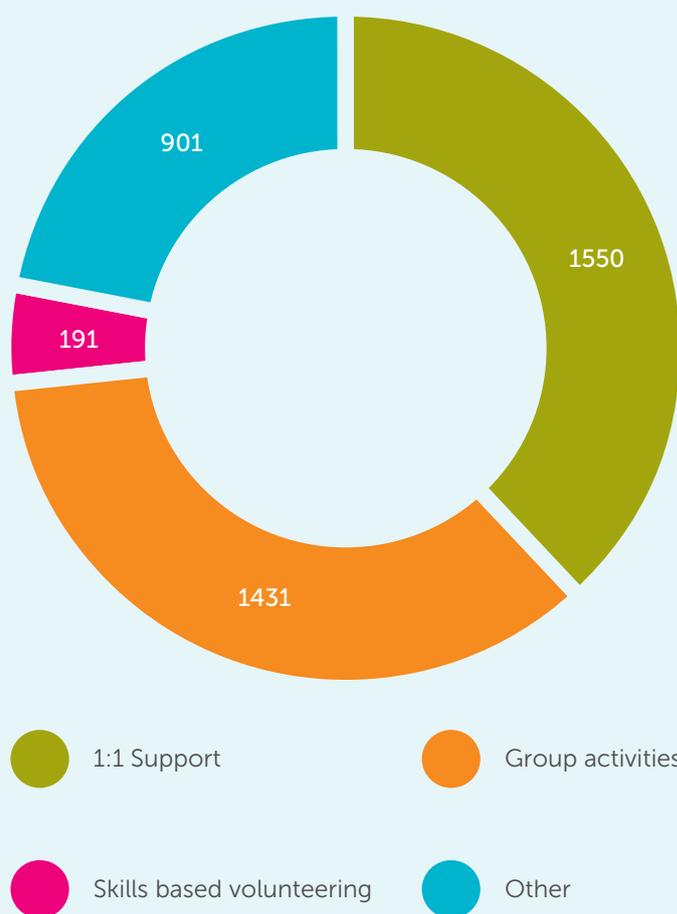


Diagram 1 – Number of volunteers performing different types of direct support roles

Volunteers also performed the following indirect support roles - administration, maintenance, skills based (eg IT, legal, finance), as well as performing other roles such as meals delivery, fundraising, driving and serving on Boards of Management.

Volunteers in direct support roles contribute across all the key life areas of education, employment, social participation, independence, health and wellbeing and living arrangements.

## Percentage of organisations whose volunteers support the achievement of key life areas

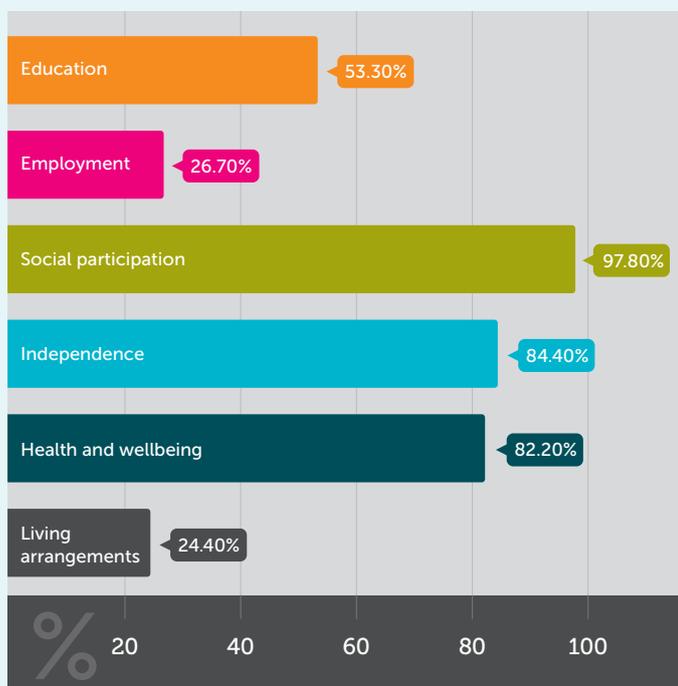


Diagram 2 – Percentage of organisations surveyed supporting achievement of key life areas through volunteers

Volunteers clearly add value and create opportunities for people with a disability to achieve key life goals. 98% of the organisations surveyed have volunteers assisting people in the area of social participation, with 84% of organisations assisting to people to achieve independence and 82% health and wellbeing. These represent already significant payoffs for people with a disability and funders in terms of genuine quality support and value for money. There is undoubtedly capacity to further develop and grow some of these areas, such as help with living arrangements, bringing even greater value.

## the difference between volunteers and paid staff

It is widely accepted that there are differences in benefits and outcomes between using paid staff and volunteers for community inclusion and participation for people with disability. 83% of respondents have observed differences. The positive differences noted include increased social connection and community participation, genuine relationships and the value of lived experience.

The respondent's comments regarding this include the following:

*'Volunteers and the people we support often develop stronger connections than that of paid staff.'*

*'The relationship can be different, not time based or output focused. More fluid and changes with the needs of individual. Strong links to community.'*

*'The child, young person and family usually feel genuine friendship and care ... it is a friend, not just a 'carer'... and friendships are sustained beyond the program'.*

*'Volunteers have more time to give for social interaction, therefore increasing much needed social networks for people and meaningful relationships are formed by sharing common interests, values and goals. This extra time and attention leads to improved self-esteem and general wellbeing as well as providing life enhancing opportunities and experiences for those people accessing our services'.*

*'For some people volunteers can be the only ones in their life who aren't 'paid' to be with them'.*

*'Volunteers are the community presence at ... They connect people to the community by using their networks and skills. Participants know that volunteers want to be part of their lives without payment to be involved'.*

*'Volunteers are viewed more as chosen contacts than staff...'*

*'We find volunteers are very committed with no expectations and see the person and not the disability. Volunteers can come with various skill sets which can be very advantageous in program planning whereby some staff have been trained in disability only which can sometimes hamper progression'.*

*'Volunteers are members of the general public who can help break down stigma - they tell their friends and family about their volunteering and it helps to widen peoples understanding. They're passionate and motivated ...)*

*'We utilise a diverse range of volunteers from 14 - 76 years of age. We will not have this diversity with only a paid workforce. Volunteers make a valuable contribution to the organisation with the supports they provide and also provides them with value and purpose. It is a beneficial arrangement for the clients, organisation and volunteers'.*

## transitioning to the ndis

Nearly all of the respondent organisations (96%) aspire to continue to provide volunteer supports under the NDIS. However only a third (33%) of those surveyed have made any plans to transition their volunteer programs into the NDIS.

This statistic is very concerning and represents a real danger for loss of social capital. It undoubtedly reflects the lack of information and government policy regarding how volunteering programs will fit and be funded under the NDIS. With no clear pathways for transition, this leaves organisations floundering and without clear messages to give people with a disability and their families currently supported by volunteers. There is a wide spread concern from organisations about the impact of failure or delayed transition of programs into the NDIS where volunteers directly support people with a disability into the NDIS.

## where to from here

Volunteers play a significant and vital role in the delivery of support to people with a disability in Australia. Volunteers create community and are an essential resource for many people with a disability to live full, inclusive lives enjoying the same opportunities as others.

Yet it is still unclear how and if volunteer based services, such as those represented by the working group organisations, are to be funded under the NDIS. There is a danger of losing thousands of volunteers and hundreds of thousands of hours of support to people with disabilities unless this situation is resolved.

For the NDIS to avoid inadvertently limiting or destroying the very social capital it wants to promote that enables people with a disability to enjoy real community inclusion and vital support, **urgent action** must be taken to establish appropriate funding models for volunteer services providing direct support for people with a disability.

It is unknown how many disability support providers across Australia engage volunteers in the direct support of people with a disability. Further research is required to understand the number of services, what funding they receive and the various roles that volunteers undertake in supporting people with a disability and helping them achieve a fulfilled life with genuine participation and inclusion in community. Without knowing the extent of these services and the funding required for their continuation, it is not possible to know if the funding planned for future ILC activities (of which volunteer services might be a part) will be adequate to continue these vital services.

Some organisations have developed a volunteer capacity alongside other services, which are not government funded. A mechanism to include and understand the scope of existing volunteer services is also required. Anecdotally, some of these programs are being lost in the NDIS launch sites as organisations concentrate their efforts on transitioning to the NDIS. Further stories exist of volunteers being supplanted by paid workers, in contrast to the objects of the NDIS legislation.

### Recommendation 7

That state governments conduct an audit of existing state funded volunteer supports targeted specifically towards people with a disability and their families in order to determine if the current funding envelope for ILC will reduce, maintain or expand the existing social capital.

## volunteering and the ndis

Effectively recruiting, screening, assessing, training and managing volunteers to work with vulnerable people and achieve meaningful outcomes takes significant work and resourcing. It should not be seen as a cheaper option but as a vital part of building a community that is inclusive of people with a disability. Volunteer services also sit alongside and integrate with other disability services. Inclusion Melbourne believe that effective volunteer support must sit within disability or specialist organisations who understand the required focus of support and can train and support volunteers to effectively help people achieve outcomes.

There are two aspects of volunteering that require separate detailed consideration in relation to supporting and growing volunteering in the NDIS. The first is *supporting people with a disability to become volunteers*, while the second is *encouraging others to volunteer to support people with a disability*. The NDIA should seek to determine how best to fund support for both of these activities.

### Recommendation 8

That the NDIA conduct research into models for funding establishment and maintenance of volunteering models which may include sourcing via ILC, individual funding allocations via packages or else a combination of these two approaches, with regard for:

- participants of the scheme and other Australians with a disability who will not receive a funded support package; and
- support and assistance for volunteers to assist people with a disability as well as support and assistance for people with a disability to become volunteers.



An additional complication is that the ILC commissioning framework assumes that other services remain static and do not alter their existing funding and policy levers. Already, funding for volunteer resource centres (VRCs) is stretched and the 2016 Federal budget has made \$12 million of cuts to federally funded volunteer services. Should other state and local governments follow this lead, support to volunteering will be significantly disrupted. In June 2015 ABS data revealed that participation in volunteering had declined for the first time in almost 20 years in Australia, falling by 5 percent.

Inclusion Melbourne has a high profile and strong bonds in both the volunteering and disability sectors in Victoria and while Inclusion Melbourne supports approximately 2 volunteers for every person with an intellectual disability that we support, less than 1% of our volunteers have been referred to our organisation via a VRC. Therefore, how will ILC funding support greater connection between VRCs and disability support organisations? Further, will VRC funding be cut or redirected away from supporting connection to disability support organisations once ILC funding is available? Conversely, what impetus will a VRC have to support a person with a disability to become a volunteer if VRC contracts explicitly exclude support for people with a disability, leaving this to those organisations that obtain funding via ILC to provide these activities?

#### **Recommendation 9**

**That the ILC sourcing process clarifies NDIA expectations in relation to fostering improved connections between registered providers and volunteer resource centres**

## **funding volunteering for people with a disability and the ndis**

As previously outlined, there are a range of ways to fund volunteer coordination and support for people with a disability within the NDIS. This work has previously been detailed in the paper titled Volunteer Supported Service Models within the NDIS context through the lens of the Interchange Host Program.

- a. ILC funding
- b. Participant funding
- c. a combination of the above

### **option a: ILC funding**

ILC funding is intended for the delivery of non-individualised, capacity building that strengthens the capacity and adequacy of both disability specific and mainstream service providers, and by implication, the entire community. ILC funding for volunteer including organisations would enable a focus on capacity building and community engagement with volunteers in order to facilitate NDIS participants with ready access to a pool of trained and safety screened volunteers.

ILC funding would be congruent with the commission requirements for ILC, namely that in order to be able to apply for funding, ILC activities must:

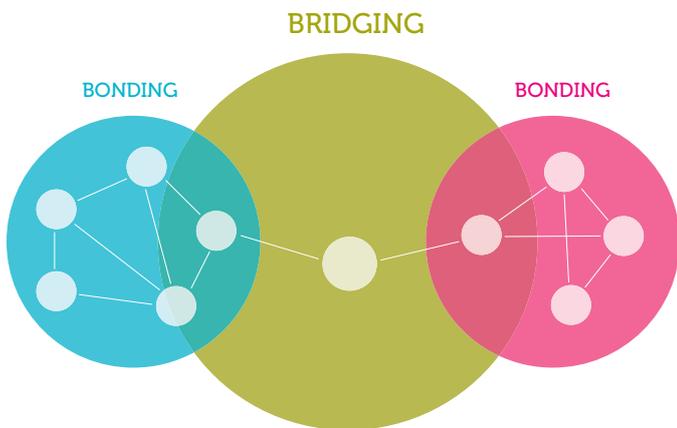
- Fit in one of the 4 ILC policy areas
- Fit into one of the 5 priority areas listed in the commissioning framework

However, ILC funding is not intended to be utilised for the provision of an ongoing support to an individual person. Given the requirements for pre-employment screening for staff and volunteers in place in Victoria and other jurisdictions and the need for other quality safeguards, including incident reporting and revised criminal records checks on a three-yearly cycle suggests a level of involvement beyond that intended by the scope of ILC.

#### **Recommendation 10**

**That the NDIA clarify the boundaries of ILC supports where the provision of these services intersects with quality and safeguarding frameworks**

Social capital is a collective set of social relations that, when taken together, make possible what would have been impossible without those relations. Communities high in social capital are well-connected and exhibit mutually reciprocated trust, and as a result have access to greater amounts of collective potential. Volunteering is a strategy used by progressive organisations to seek to create relationships and friendships between people with and without a disability, in order to create this social capital and the benefits it brings.



It is acknowledged that there are two types of social capital: bonding and bridging. Bonding refers to the type of social relationships that occur within families, close friends, and other tight-knit groups. Bonding social capital might be similar to social or familial support, and draws its strength from a shared set of norms, values, and expectations.

Bridging social capital refers to connections made among people who are familiar with but not close to one another – for example, acquaintances, co-workers, or co-members of an organization. Bridging social capital often involves a connection between two separate groups, and represents a link through which information, values, and ideas can flow.

The underpinning philosophy utilised by volunteer supporting organisations is to support bonding activities. By recruiting on values (as well as other attributes), organisations seek to create durable links through engagement in sustained, repeated activity. However, at present these activities sit outside of the scope of the ILC activity streams but sit within activities funded within Tier 3 of the system (eg: meeting a person at home to assist them to prepare a meal, or to go to the shops or a recreational facility together). It is through this repeated exposure to each other that services create and support connection that leads to the establishment of friendships and therefore social capital. Within Inclusion Melbourne, the roles may be arbitrary, as our aim is to create friendship and the activity is the vehicle to promote this. However under the current approach to ILC this type of volunteering support is not permitted.

#### Recommendation 11

**That the NDIA review ILC activity streams to permit the use of volunteers in ordinary life activities as a vehicle for growing connections and creating friendship, thereby achieving the object of increasing social participation**

#### option b: individual participant funding

Theoretically, elements of the volunteer programs could be funded on an individualised basis. An example of a similar approach is that of government funding for employment outcomes with payments made upon commencement and at regular markers through the establishment of the employment relationship. Analysis of successful volunteer including organisations would enable accurate setting of pricing and rewards, with the ability to structure and vary payments throughout a funding cycle to prevent rorting of the system. This approach would encourage organisations to develop sophisticated and effective volunteer support mechanisms and training to reduce volunteer turnover and churn, recognising that a large proportion of costs are incurred in the initial recruitment, selection, matching and appointment of the volunteer. In this model it would be expected that costs reduce over a 3-, 5- or 7- year timeframe if adequately supported during establishment and the early years, as well as continuing to provide ongoing training opportunities, recognition and ad hoc support. Such an approach assumes that there is a correlation between years of service and likelihood of continuation of further service.

#### Recommendation 12

**That the NDIA give consideration to existing individually targeted outcomes based funding models as to their suitability in creating and driving quality volunteer supports**

A concern with implementing individual funding is the extent to which this approach would adversely affect the volunteering premise. Direct payment for the service changes the underlying relationship so that it is no longer volunteer based. As a paid, rather than voluntary service, the willingness to volunteer may be changed, and the generation of reciprocity and friendship forfeited.

Often, dozens of hours are invested in recruiting and commencing a match only to have it fall over for a range of reasons outside of the control of the organisation. Under an individually funded approach, the organisation and/or the participant would be negatively impacted. Likewise, the organisation would be unable to claim for funds in months where a volunteer takes a break (eg: due to childbirth, exams, new job or holiday) but may still be incurring or amortising costs associated with the volunteer (eg: requirement to obtain a new criminal records check or undertake a quality assurance requirement).

Because the ability to make a successful match is highly variable and uncertain, the practicality and feasibility of individualised funding may be problematic. Without base funding, organisations lack the certainty required to employ professional volunteer coordinators and therefore the capacity to recruit volunteers and deliver the service where it is requested by individual participants.

### option c – combination

A third funding option is a combination of ILC funding and participant funding. In this approach, ILC funding could be used for those activities that are arguably beyond a single NDIS participant, such as to publicise, source and provide core training to volunteers, support of waiting lists, innovative development and quality improvement, while participant funding could be used for service components specific to an individual such as matching and assessment, non-transferable volunteer training, support, reviews and so forth.

However, it is noted that the word 'volunteer' does not appear in the current NDIA Price Guide. This suggests that the NDIS is yet to fully articulate a strategy to support the transition of existing inclusive volunteering into the NDIS. Unless this is addressed the activities of many volunteer connecting organisations will not be funded as they transition into the NDIS given that the activity is not mentioned in the tier 3 pricing guide and that ILC funding is intended for the delivery of non-individualised supports, resulting in the exclusion of individual matching and support activities.

#### Recommendation 13

That the NDIA include specific mention of funding for volunteer connection and coordination within the price guide.

#### Recommendation 14

That the NDIA price guide acknowledges funding must be ongoing in order to meet state based quality and safeguard requirements, as well as to reduce churn through the implementation of effective oversight, supervision, training and support for volunteers.

## final considerations

Volunteer supports are highly prized and highly valued by people for whom successful matches have been achieved. Achieving a successful match is dependent on multiple variables, some of which are out of the control of the program, such as the availability and willingness of volunteers who are prepared to make significant commitments. Because of the aspirational nature of volunteer programs, and the likelihood of making successful matches for some participants but not others, it is unrealistic to expect that this program can be entirely individually funded.

Volunteer supporting organisations report that demand for volunteers is high. The most valuable component in the process but the most time consuming and therefore costly is the recruiting, screening, assessment and individual matching of volunteers with participants. These comprehensive screening, assessment and matching processes, along with training and ongoing support are vital to ensure a successful match.

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## acronyms

NDIA - National Disability Insurance Agency

NDIS - National Disability Insurance Scheme

ILC - Information, Linkages and Capacity Building

COAG - Council of Australian Governments

## appendix

Organisations that participated in the survey:

Able Australia

Alkira Centre - Box Hill Inc

annecto

Bayley House

Campaspe Regional Library Service

Community Friend Program/ Melbourne City Mission

Community Living & Respite Services Inc.

Encompass Community Services

Epilepsy Foundation

Extended Families Australia

Gateways Support Services Inc.

Guide Dogs Victoria

Heidelberg East Ivanhoe Uniting Church

Inclusion Melbourne

Interchange Gippsland

Interchange Inner East

Interchange Outer East

Intereach

Karingal Inc

LINK Community Transport

Marriott Support Services

Meadows Primary School -Early Learning Centre Hub

Merri Community Health Services

MI Fellowship

Mind Australia

MOIRA Inc

Multiple Sclerosis Ltd

Newbury Child and Community Centre

Nillumbik Health

Northern Support Services

Noweyung Ltd

Oakleigh Centre

Onemda

Outlook (Vic) Inc.

OzChild

People Outdoors

Pinarc Disability Support

Rochester & Elmore District Health Service

Rushworth Community House

Shire of Campaspe

South East Volunteers Inc

South Port Day Links Inc.

St John of God Accord

The Bridge Inc

Upper Murray Family Care

Villa Maria Catholic Homes

Wimmera Uniting Care

Yooralla



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Outdoor Living  Electrical & Lighting

Point Flooring

NATURAL SYNTHETIC GRASS MAT

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GreenWall

  
RUNNING



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