

# Parents' perceptions of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) for their autistic children

**Carly Wadsworth**

Master of Psychology  
(Educational and Developmental)

Supervisors - Prof Sandra Jones, Dr Lisa Milne and Ms Jennifer Lowe

Anticipated completion date - 2022



## BACKGROUND

The aim of this qualitative study is to examine parents' perceptions of the NDIS to shed light on parents' and autistic children's experiences of the scheme.

Despite a large amount of autistic child participants under the NDIS, there is limited research exploring parents' perceptions of the NDIS for their autistic children. Given the recent proposed changes to the NDIS such as independent funding review assessments, potential funding cuts, and the politicisation of the NDIS in the recent national elections, it's important to understand parents' perceptions of the NDIS for their autistic children.<sup>1</sup>

**As of February 2022, there are approximately 500,000 NDIS participants across Australia.**

**29%** of active participants with an approved NDIS plan identify as autistic, the largest cohort represented under the NDIS.<sup>2</sup>

**41%** of active participants with an approved NDIS plan are aged under 14 years old.

**71%** of those under 14 years old receive funding for supports associated with being neurodiverse (autistic, developmental delay, intellectual disability) or psychosocial disability.<sup>3</sup>

## FINDINGS

Using a deductive approach, the researcher has identified twenty-five codes from parents' responses to open-ended survey questions regarding their perceptions of the NDIS for their autistic children.

This study is currently at the coding phase as per Braun and Clarke's (2022) reflexive thematic analysis framework. Whilst these codes are yet to be grouped into themes, proposed themes may concern parents' perceptions that:

- They need to fight for funding for their child.
- NDIS funding has increased their child's access to required services.
- There are barriers to spending their child's funding.
- There are barriers to enrolling to the NDIS.
- There is an inconsistent application of the NDIS for autistic children.
- The NDIS system and staff don't understand the needs of autistic children.

As noted, codes and themes are currently being analysed and are subject to change.

*"The lack of understanding that autism is a lifelong condition where early intervention is not going to solve all issues is going to severely impact the access to services for autistic people. We can be valuable members of the community with the right supports."*

**Parent of autistic child NDIS participant**