Transport Under the NDIS:

# Thinking Outside the Box

The introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme has brought many opportunities and challenges to the sector. Finding transport solutions for people with disability has been an area where this has been particularly demanding. NDIS funds supports that are reasonable and necessary under the NDIS Act and are related to the functional impact of the disability. Transport-related supports funded under the NDIS include training and support to use public transport, modifications to private vehicles, driver assessment and training, and some costs associated with the use of taxis, private transport, or innovative transport options. These funded supports complement, but not replace, mainstream transports such as accessible public transport options. This video explores how thinking differently about transport and increasing efficiencies can assist providers to meet participants’ transport needs under the NDIS.

# How does your organisation support participants with their transport needs under the NDIS?

## Gail Foster, Chief Executive Officer, Focus

Focus supports participants with their transport needs by providing transport, and the way that we record that transport is through the Focus Drive app. Each participant is clocked on and off the app by the driver as they get on and off the bus, and that automatically tells our administration staff how many kilometres they’ve been driven and how much to charge their NDIS plan for that transport.

## Janine Simpkin, Chief Executive Officer, Marriot Support Services

We’re in inner Melbourne, so we have lots of buses and trains around us, so we’ve chosen to go down the path of using public transport, with the opinion that public transport’s for everyone and it’s a lot more effective. That has meant we’ve had to do a lot of upskilling of participants. We use the NDIS capacity-building funding to do that if they’re going to travel independently. We’ve had huge successes. We’re reducing our bus fleet all the time, and people are feeling a lot more confident being on public transport. The benefits of that, too, is they’re actually starting to use it on weekends and after hours as well. So in the past, DHHS funding really didn’t give you enough to do that, where the NDIS funding allows you to be a bit more innovative and creative.

## Gail Foster, Chief Executive Officer, Focus

Our staff have adapted to it very well, because it makes it easier for them. They don’t have to do any paperwork. It’s just an app on any phone, or we use mini iPads to do it, so they just sign into the app before they start their journey, click on who the participants are that are on the bus and what the kilometres are on each bus, and then they do the same at the other end. That automatically goes back to our admin staff to tell them exactly how many kilometres to charge each person’s NDIS plan. The resistance to it from the staff has been very low, because people are quite used to using apps on the phones these days.

# What new practices has your organisation put into place in relation to participant transport?

## Janine Simpkin, Chief Executive Officer, Marriot Support Services

I think under the NDIS we use transport a lot more with people with high support needs, too, because we, rather than bussing them to a place or taxiing them, we’re actually using public transport, to use it so the experience is with public transport as well as whatever activity they’re choosing to go to, so it does broaden their range of activities that they can participate in. However, we obviously do work starting off in whatever space they’re in, whether it’s an office space or some community centre, learning about how to travel on public transport. So they’ll look at public PTV apps, make sure that they can understand the apps. We – when they start off travelling independently we give them a phone – and that might just be that they’re going down to the shops, to be honest, just walking. When they go on public transport, we’d like them to have a mobile phone.

## Gail Foster, Chief Executive Officer, Focus

The beginning for us was back in 2015 when the NDIS was starting to become a reality. We had a look at all our transport needs, knowing that we couldn’t stop doing transport. Because of the position we were in on the Peninsula there just wasn’t any other way, so people wouldn’t have been able to get to our services or access any of our services without us providing the transport. And in 2015 our buses travelled 950,000 kilometres and it was costing us $1500 a day, so we had to do something about transport, but we knew that we had to continue to provide transport. So we rationalised all of our bus runs and had a look at where each bus was going and who they were picking up and all of those things and fiddled around with that. In 2018 we still did 700,000 kilometres, so we needed to find a way to recoup some of the costs for that, and the app was just the best way for us to do it.

## Janine Simpkin, Chief Executive Officer, Marriot Support Services

If you’ve got someone who needs one-to-one support, rather than pop them into a car to go somewhere think about using public transport. It’s a great mediator in our community. You go there, you’re one of a person that’s going somewhere for some reason with a whole lot of other people. You’re also teaching that person, even if they’ve got significant areas that they haven’t got capacity and you’re teaching them how to be on public transport and to just be an average Joe Blow so they just blend in. And of course, the benefit is that the community sees all sorts of people with disabilities just being average Joe Blows on the public transport system.

# Narrator

Providers should consider the breadth of options available under the Scheme to support people with disability to become more independent using transport, and include the utilisation of mainstream and community transport options. NDIS funding gives people the opportunity to explore ways to build their capacity to participate fully in all aspects of life.

# National Disability Services

NDS is the peak body for more than 1,000 non-government disability service providers and is the only organisation that represents the full spectrum of disability service providers across Australia.

NDS believes that the information contained in this video is correct at the time of publishing. However, NDS reserves the right to vary any of this video without further notice. The information provided in this video should not be relied on instead of other legal, medical, financial or professional advice.

End of document.