



**SOUTH WEST**  
**COMMUNITY TRANSPORT**

# **NDIS SURVEY 2018**

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## Introduction

The National Disability Insurance Scheme is a new program that provides support for Australians under the age of 65 with a significant and permanent disability. The full scheme has been gradually rolled out in Australia from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016, and NDIS coverage in NSW has already expanded to include the Southwestern Sydney region. Its purpose is to provide individualised, flexible support to those with disabilities in order to improve their quality of life, such as through access to mainstream services/supports, and community services/supports. These incorporate such areas and services as doctors, teachers, justice systems, aged care systems, libraries, community groups, and community transport.

As NDIS support is provided on an individualised basis, a participant must demonstrate that their circumstances do not allow use of public transport (or will have substantial difficulty when doing so) when applying for transport funding. There are three levels of participant support for transport, ranging from up to \$1606 per year to \$3456 per year depending on the participant's work and study status. The support provided for transport is restricted to the participant alone, and funding is not provided for carers or family members who provide transport for the participant. Participants who do use public transport may apply for capacity building funding under the NDIS to develop their skills to travel more independently.

South West Community Transport (SWCT) is a not-for-profit organisation that receives funding under the Commonwealth Home Support Programme for clients aged 65 or above who require transport assistance, as well as a small percentage of funding from the Community Transport Program for people who are transport-disadvantaged. Clients under the age of 65 with a disability, as well as their carers, were covered under the NSW Community Care Supports Program, which has now been transitioned into the NDIS. Since this change, SWCT's transport costs are now based on a full cost recovery basis, which participants are now required to pay for out of their transport allowance or NDIA Core package.

This survey has been undertaken one and a half years since the NDIS was commenced in Australia, and is aimed at capturing the opinions of those clients who have previously applied for the NDIS, about their NDIS funding structure and their satisfaction with the program.

## Survey Aim and Methodology

The survey was conducted in order to obtain feedback about clients' experiences under the newly-implemented NDIS. This survey was conducted via a telephone call to clients who are currently registered as NDIS participants with SWCT and either currently use or have used SWCT as a means of transportation to various activities or appointments. To obtain a representative sample among the 132 clients who fit these criteria, we aimed to obtain a response rate of at least 50%, or 66 clients.

All of the aforementioned 132 clients were contacted via telephone call, out of whom 93 gave their verbal consent to the survey and gave a complete response to all the questions. Clients were telephoned on at least three occasions to maximise the number of people we could reach, and thus to maximise the number of responses. All surveys were conducted in English over two days, from 7<sup>th</sup> February 2018 to 8<sup>th</sup> February 2018, by two Western Sydney University medical students.

## Results

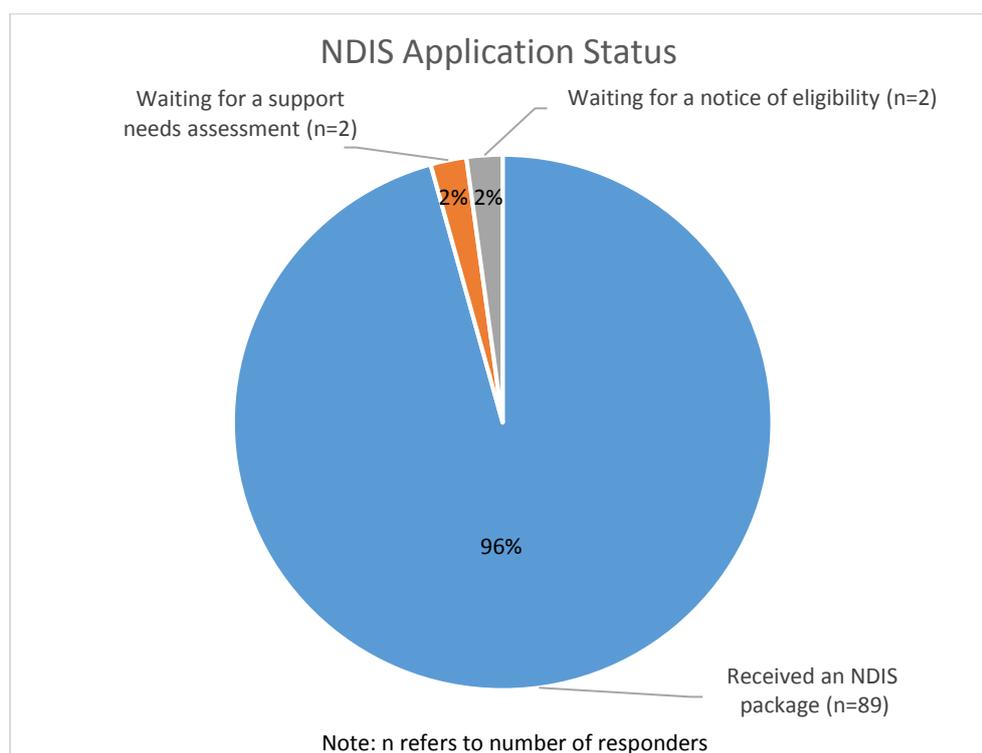
The following is an analysis of the responses received. Raw data collected from the survey can be found in Appendix B.

### Response Rate

Of the 132 clients who were contacted, 93 (70.45%) completed the survey. The majority of clients readily agreed to answer the questionnaire, while those who did not do so were of non-English speaking background, did not wish to participate, did not answer any calls, or had passed away. Furthermore, a large number of clients did not have sufficient knowledge of their NDIS plans due to age or disability, and their parents, carers, or guardians responded on their behalf.

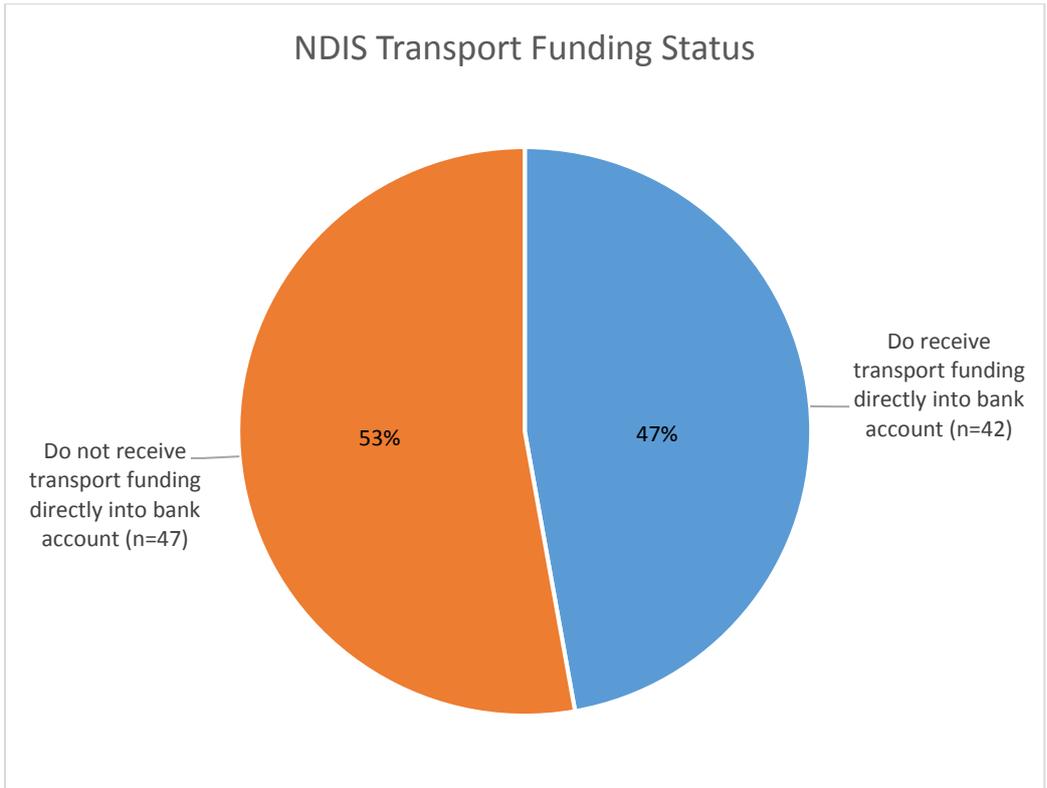
### NDIS Application Status

All 93 responders to the survey had applied for NDIS. Out of these, the majority (95.70%) were approved as eligible and had received an NDIS package. For the remaining clients, 2.15% were waiting for a support needs assessment, while the same proportion (2.15%) was waiting for a notice of eligibility.

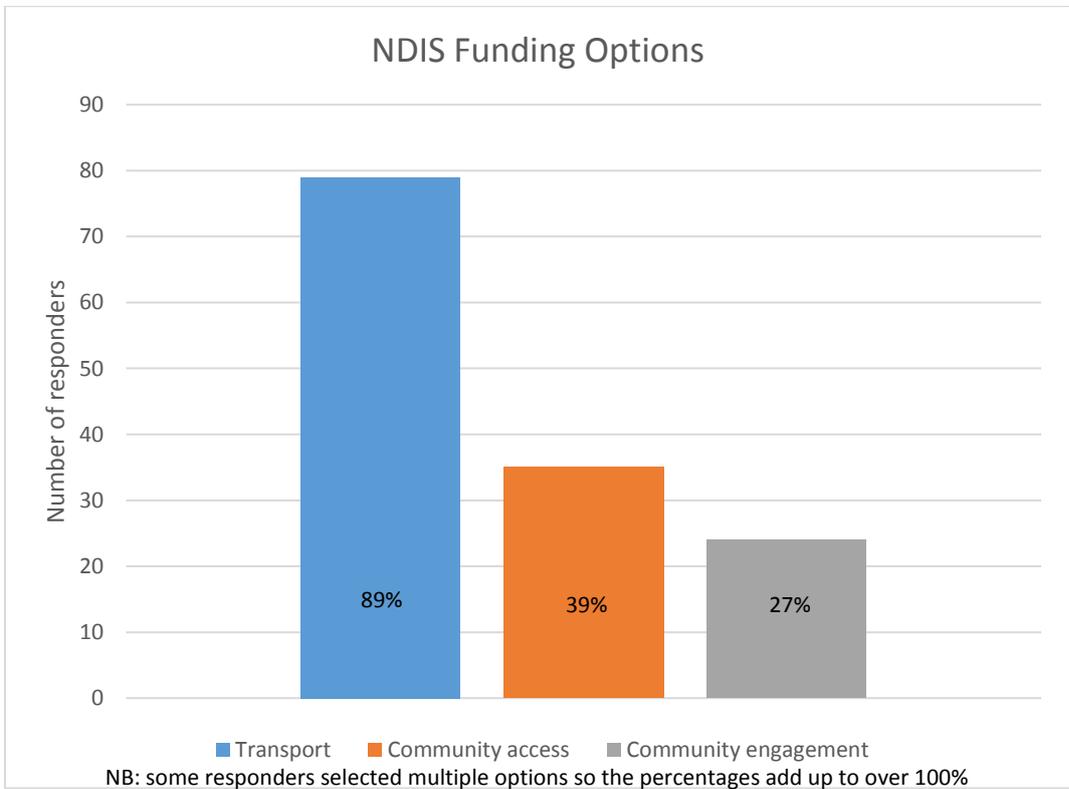


### NDIS Funding Status

Among participants who were approved as eligible and had an NDIS package, 42 (47.19%) received transport funding directly into their bank account, while the remainder (52.81%) did not.

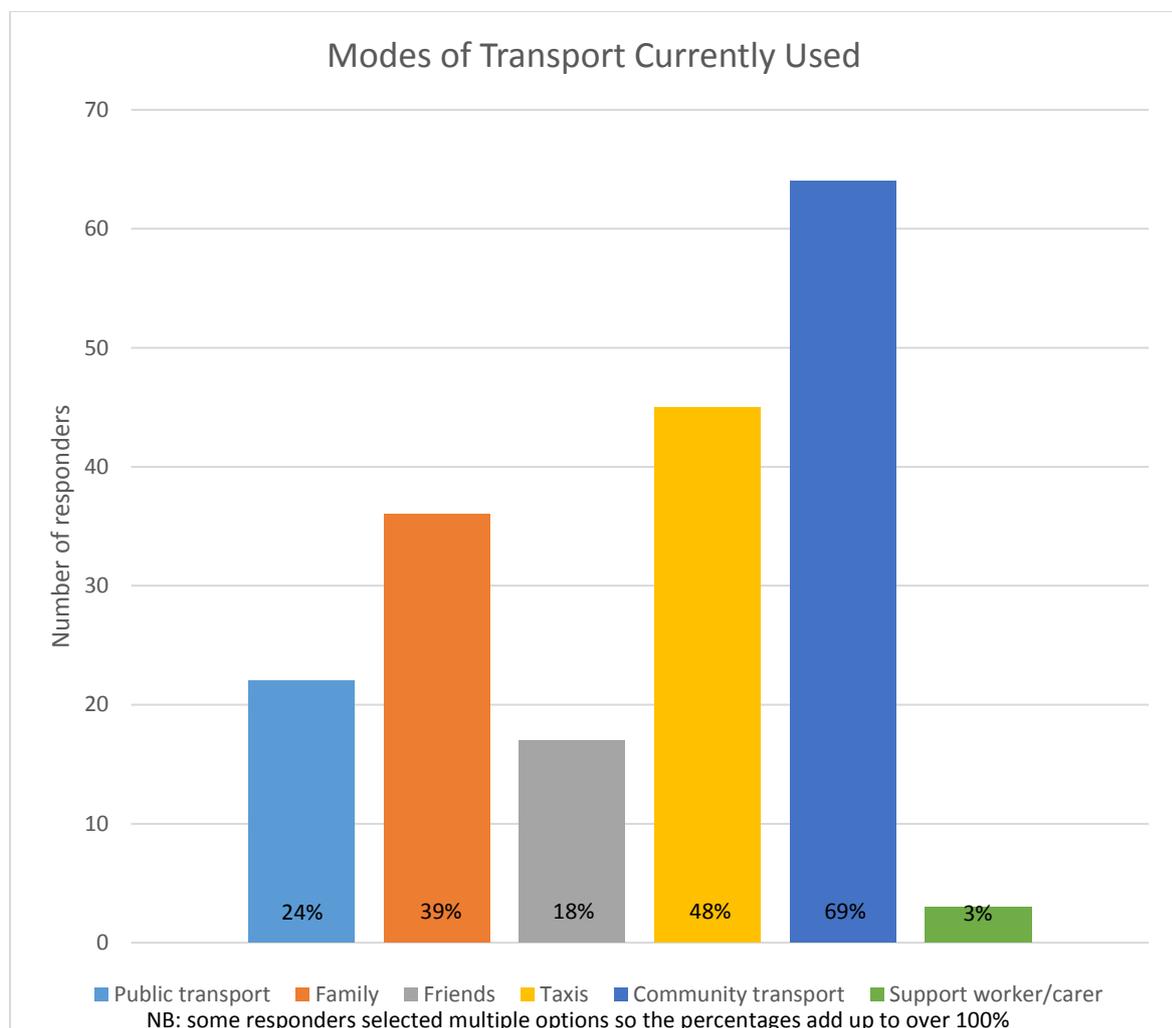


Among the 89 responders who had received an NDIS package, 79 (88.76%) had funds in their Core package for Transport, 35 (39.33%) had Community Access, and 24 (26.97%) had Community Engagement. Responders chose multiple options here, so percentages add up to over 100%.



## Transport Modalities

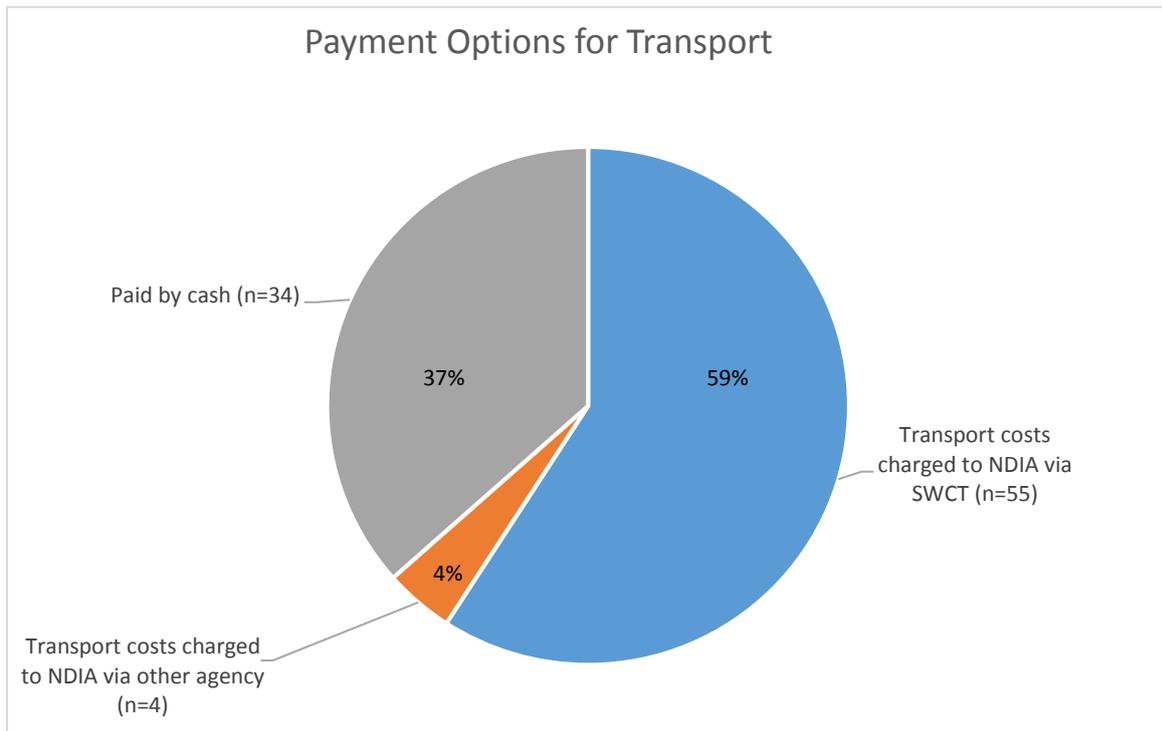
Among all 93 clients interviewed, a wide variety of transport modalities was found to be currently utilised. Of these, the most widely used was community transport, with 64 (68.82%) using this transport option. Of note, 17 responders within this cohort of people using community transport reported no other forms of transportation being used at this point in time. The next most prevalent forms of transport were taxis (45 people, 48.39%) and being driven by a family member (36 people, 38.71%), with some responders utilising public transport (22 people, 23.66%), being driven by a friend (17 people, 18.28%), or being driven by a support worker or carer (3 people, 3.23%). Of the responders who use taxis, a significant proportion of them were through community transport organisations, such as SWCT. In addition, several responders noted using family members due to increasing prices of transport under NDIS. Responders chose multiple options here, so percentages add up to over 100%.



## Transport Payment Options

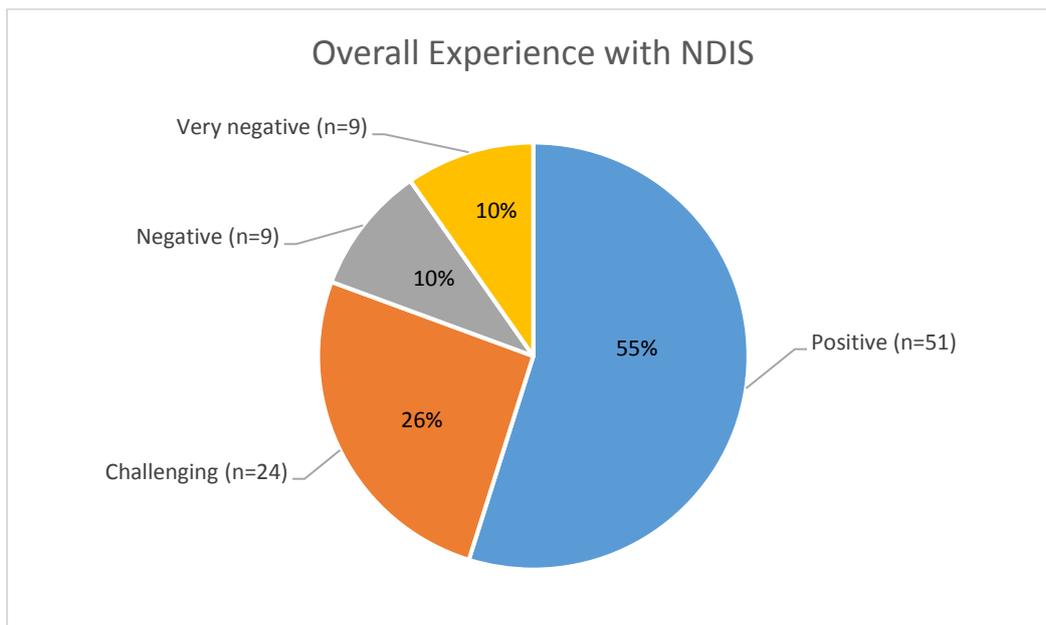
In total, 59 (63.44%) people charged their transport costs to the NDIA. Out of these 59 people, 55 (93.22%) did this through SWCT, while 4 (6.78%) did this through another NDIS-approved agency. The 34 (36.56%) people who did not charge their transport costs to the NDIA all paid by cash, and

among them, 1 (1.08%) person did not have funds in their NDIS package, and 1 person (1.08%) did not know how to charge their transport costs to the NDIA.



### Overall Experience with NDIS

When rating their overall experience with the NDIS, 51 (54.84%) responders noted a positive experience. However, 24 (25.81%) found it challenging, while 9 (9.67%) people have had an overall negative experience. The remaining 9 (9.67%) people reported having an overall very negative experience.



A large number of participants chose to give extra feedback or comments with their response, and there were several common issues (when over 10 responders gave the same comment) that were noted, as below:

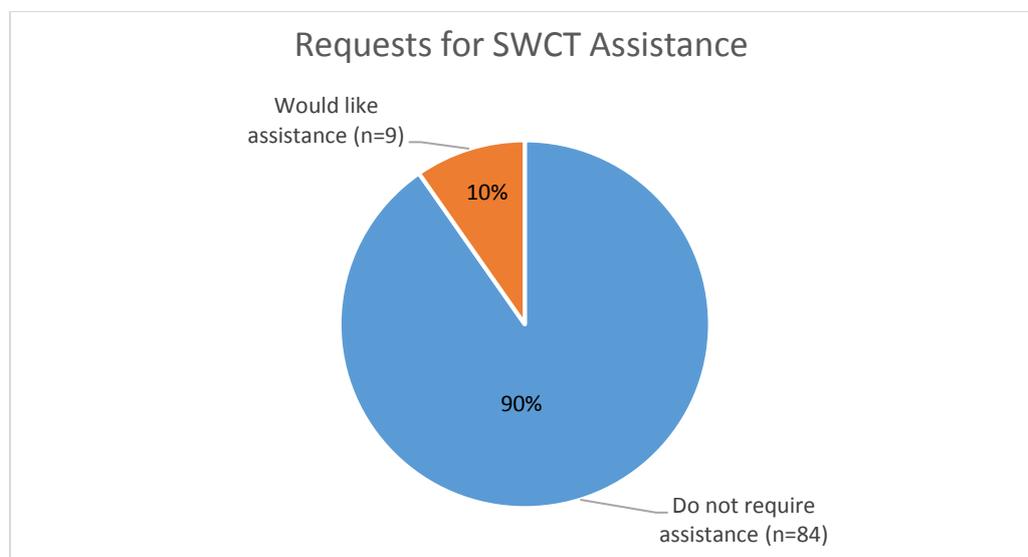
- *"Under NDIS, I/we have managed to gain access to many services and implements, but transport costs have increased too much and our transport allowance just isn't enough"*
- *"Communication with the NDIA isn't great, and neither is the admin. It takes a long time to get in touch with my NDIS core support manager, process information, and there are often miscommunications or contradictions."*
- *"NDIS is really confusing in general, so I have somebody managing my NDIS package"*
- *"It's been difficult to get an appointment with the NDIA"*
- *"I've needed to arrange alternative methods of transportation and cut down on my outings and shopping trips because transport is becoming less affordable"*

Other comments (less than 5 responders) that were noted at this point are also included below:

- *"It took 6 months to get my mobility aid after NDIS approval"*
- *"I have \$40,000 in my account, expiring in May, and I've been trying to contact my NDIS core support manager to arrange a carer to take me out for coffee or shopping, but they haven't come."*
- *"During the initial stages of NDIS, it was ok, but upon full implementation it's been total chaos"*

#### Role of SWCT

In addition to asking clients about their experiences with the NDIS, the prospect of SWCT offering advice to clients about transport costs and the NDIS was offered in each survey. In response, most clients (84 people, 90.32%) stated that they do not require assistance, while the remainder (9 people, 9.68%) requested assistance in one or more of three ways. Among these 9 people, 1 person (11.11%) requested advice on how to charge their transport costs to the NDIA, 6 people (66.67%) requested information regarding transport costs for an NDIS review, and 5 (55.56%) people requested a quote for their transport needs.



## Conclusions and Recommendations

It is clear from this survey that there have been a range of responses with respect to client satisfaction under the NDIS. While there outwardly appears to be to be a mostly positive experience with NDIS (54.84%), there are several factors which must not be ignored. There is still a significant proportion (45.16%) of clients who have found their experience with the NDIS to be challenging, negative, or very negative. Furthermore, in conversation with the responders, it was found that they often considered the experience to be positive overall due to their increased access to other services and implements, such as mobility aids, despite the rising costs of transport. Some responders also reported a change in transport arrangements since the implementation of the NDIS, relying on family and public transport.

The results of the survey reveal some underlying concerns that may warrant further exploration in a follow-up questionnaire, in order to clarify and quantify these concerns. In particular, it could focus more on the reasons why the clients rated their experiences as positive or negative, as some clients noted differences in their experiences with transport and other aspects of the NDIS, while others did not comment on the reasons for their choice of response.

Another common concern was over communication with the NDIA, specifically over the time it took to process enquiries and applications, and occasional mistakes in communication. More data may also be needed to clarify the full extent of clients' experiences with communication in order to determine the exact magnitude of this issue.

Finally, it appears that the majority (90.32%) of clients do not require assistance from SWCT for information about transport costs or quotes, suggesting that the information on NDIA's policies and transport provision provided by SWCT has supported clients, their families, or their carers in accessing the funds to support their travel needs.

## Appendix A. Survey questions

1. Have you applied for the NDIS?

- Yes       No

2. If not, what were your reasons?

- I didn't know about NDIS  
 It was too difficult and confusing  
 I didn't think I'd be eligible

3. If yes, did you receive an NDIS package?

- Yes – I'm eligible  
 No – I'm not eligible  
 No, I'm waiting for my notice of eligibility  
 No, but I'm appealing the decision  
 No, I'm still waiting for my support needs assessment

4. If you did not apply or are not eligible for NDIS, what transport options are you currently using (multiple options)?

- Public transport  
 Family  
 Friends  
 Taxi  
 Community transport  
 I drive myself  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

5. If you received an NDIS package:

a) Do you receive NDIS funding for transport directly into your bank account?

- Yes       No

b) Do you have funds in your NDIS package for:

- Transport     Community access     Community engagement

6. What transport options are you currently using?

- Public transport  
 Family  
 Friends  
 Taxi  
 Community transport  
 I drive myself  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Have you been charging your transport costs to the NDIA?

- No – I'm paying cash  
 No – I don't know how to do this  
 No – I don't have funds in my NDIS package  
 No – I self-manage my NDIS package  
 Yes – SWCT charges my NDIA account

Yes – Another agency charges my NDIA account  
(Name of agency: \_\_\_\_\_)

8. Regarding the NDIS, how can SWCT assist you?

- No assistance required
- Provide advice on how I can charge my transport costs to the NDIA
- Provide me with information regarding transport costs for an NDIS review
- Provide a quote for my transport needs

9. How would you describe your overall experience with the NDIS?

- Positive
  - Challenging
  - Negative
  - Very negative
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
-

## Appendix B. Collated raw data

Applicant status: Number of people		
<i>Applied for NDIS: 93</i>		
Received package: 89	Waiting for assessment: 2	Waiting for eligibility notice: 2
<i>Did not apply for NDIS: 0</i>		

Funding Status	Number of people
Receive NDIS funding directly into bank account	42
Do not receive NDIS funding directly into bank account	47
Have funding in NDIS package for transport	79
Have funding in NDIS package for community access	35
Have funding in NDIS package for community engagement	24

Mode of transport	Number of people
Public transport	22
Family	36
Friends	17
Taxis	45
Community transport	64
Carer/support worker	3

Transport cost status	Number of people
Paying cash	34
Don't know how to charge transport costs to NDIA	1
Don't have funds in NDIS package	1
Charge transport costs to NDIA via SWCT	55
Charge transport costs to NDIA via other organisations	4 (1 each for Alive4life, Communities@Work, Integra, Interchange)

SWCT advice options	Number of people
Don't require assistance	84
Would like advice on how to charge transport costs to the NDIA	1
Would like information regarding transport costs for an NDIS review	6
Would like a quote for their transport needs	5

NDIS experience	Number of people
Positive	51
Challenging	24
Negative	9
Very negative	9