

## Participant Handbook

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Please also find our Easy English brochures that accompany this handbook.

### Welcome To Headway Gippsland Inc.

Welcome to Headway Gippsland Inc. This information has been developed to give you a greater understanding about us, our policies and procedures, the services we provide, and your rights and responsibilities. We are a registered NDIS service provider;

Our Provider Registration Number is 4-433C-646.

We are registered to provide a range of registered supports. The current list of approved NDIS services is available from the Administration Officer at our Morwell office. As a team of dedicated professionals, our services are aimed at supporting your wellbeing and independence at home and in the community.

### Our Mission

Headway Gippsland's mission is to support and empower people with disabilities to live independent, meaningful, and enriched lives.

### Our Values

- Respect
- Collaboration
- Innovation
- Diversity
- Integrity



### Our Philosophy

1. We promote independence, choice, and inclusion for all individuals with disabilities and empower them to achieve their goals.
2. We believe in collaborating with our clients, their families, and the community to provide high-quality services.
3. We foster a co-design approach where individuals with disabilities are at the centre of their own care.
4. We strive to inspire a society that respects and celebrates human diversity.
5. We endeavour to share our knowledge, seek learning opportunities, and grow together.

### Our Commitment to Child Safety

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Headway Gippsland is a child safe organisation. We are committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children accessing our services, including the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, children from all CALD backgrounds and children with a disability. Headway Gippsland has zero tolerance for child abuse, and has specific policies and procedures in place to support and educate our staff and volunteers. All allegations and safety concerns are treated seriously and acted upon immediately.

### Our Services

#### Social Support Programs

The Social Support Service promotes the development and maintenance of appropriate social skills. It provides social and recreational activities within the community. This service relies on the assistance of volunteers who work under the guidance of the coordinator. The program provides social and recreational activities one day per week across the Gippsland region.

The groups operate on the following days:

<b>Monday</b>	Trafalgar Community Centre, Princes Highway, Trafalgar 0448 567 693
<b>Wednesday</b>	Senior Citizens Building, Maryvale Crescent, Morwell 0428 177 466
<b>Friday</b>	Wonthaggi Senior Citizens Centre, Murray Street, Wonthaggi 0409 421 774

The program fee: is different for each group don't hesitate to get in touch with the Morwell office for more information, with participants paying costs associated with activities or purchases No participant will be disadvantaged if unable to pay the program fee. Transport to and from the Social Support program is the responsibility of the participant/Nominee

Headway Gippsland Inc. provides the following services:

- Support Coordination
  - Support Coordinators assist people to build the skills they need to understand, implement and use their NDIS plan. The support coordinator works with clients to ensure a mix of supports are used to increase their capacity to maintain relationships, manage service delivery tasks, live more independently and be included in their local community.
- Plan Management
  - Plan managers support NDIS clients to manage their NDIS budgets and to pay providers for the supports people purchase. Plan managers help clients to keep track of their funds, take care of any financial reporting.
- Various support services and skills development programs within the home and community.
  - We Provide 1:1 Supports, Social Support Groups and Home Care - As a part of our supports our Life Skills Officers help our clients in terms of their progress to achieve their goals, we provide our Life Skills Officers a support plan about you, which help them be able to support

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you better, this is reviewed and evaluated each time you get a new plan, and helps enable better progress towards achieving your goals.

- **Conflict of Interest**
  - Headway is committed to supporting people to have choice and control and will always assist participants to access the support options most suitable for them. Headway provides a range of NDIS funded services including plan management, support coordination and direct care and we are aware that this could be perceived as a conflict of interest.
  - We will discuss any potential conflict of interest with you or your representative and ensure you are provided with a range of options when choosing service providers.

### **Our Staff**

At Headway Gippsland Inc. we employ qualified and experienced staff. We assess each person's suitability for this type of work through our rigorous recruitment and induction process which includes screening; verification of experience; and a detailed orientation program.

Staff are required to undergo a NDIS Worker Screening check.

### **Matching**

We recognise the significance of matching the right staff member to meet your needs and consider a number of factors such as personality, language, culture and skill requirements. We encourage and support you to be involved in the process of matching your needs with the right staff. We can also support you to access an advocate of your choice to support you in this process.

### **Changing or Cancelling a service**

If we need to change or cancel an appointment with you, we will endeavour to give you 24 hours' notice (one business day) except in exceptional circumstances.

If we change or cancel an appointment with you, we will not bill your plan for the cancelled appointment.

- If you make a short-notice cancellation (or no-show), the provider may charge up to 100% of the fee associated with the activity. There is no limit on the number of short-notice cancellations (or no-shows) that you can be charged for

A cancellation is a short-notice cancellation (or no-show) if you have given

- Less than seven (7) clear business days' notice
- The provider was not able to find alternative billable work for the relevant worker and is required to pay the worker for the time that would have been spent providing the support
- All cancellations for NDIS support provided by Headway Gippsland are subject to change as per guidelines set by the NDIS

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- For any services included in a support schedule, 30 days' notice is required to withdraw from the service included in your scheduled support.

You can change or cancel an appointment you have made with us by:

Calling Headway Gippsland Head Office (Morwell) – 03 5127 7166 Or email us at [intake@headwaygippsland.org.au](mailto:intake@headwaygippsland.org.au)

Or in an emergency, contact our after-hours number on – 0448 472 007

### Rights & Responsibilities

Headway Gippsland Inc. agrees to:

- Review the provisions of support at least 6 monthly with you
- Provide supports that meet your needs at your preferred times and dates
- Communicate openly and honestly with you or your representative promptly
- Treat you with courtesy and respect.
- Consult you or your representative on decisions about how supports are provided
- Give you or your nominee information about managing any complaints or disagreements and details of the provider's cancellation policy (if relevant)
- Listen to your feedback and resolve problems as quickly as possible within the guidelines
- Where possible, give you a minimum of 24 hours' notice if Headway Gippsland has to change a scheduled appointment to provide support to you
- Inform you promptly if we are unable to provide you with a suitable staff member or replacement
- Give you the required notice if the Provider needs to end the Service Agreement (see 'Ending this Service Agreement' below for more information)
- Protect your privacy and confidential Information
- Provide support in a manner consistent with all relevant laws, including the National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013 and rules and the Australian Consumer Law; keep accurate records on the support provided to you
- Issue regular invoices and statements of the support delivered to you
- Adhere to Headway Gippsland code of conduct.

### Responsibilities Of the Participant

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The Participant agrees to:

- Inform Headway Gippsland about how you wish the support to be delivered to meet your needs
- Treat all staff and other participants who attend Headway Gippsland with dignity and respect
- Talk to Headway Gippsland if you have any concerns about the support being provided
- Headway Gippsland has a duty of care to its participants and if a participant has an unusual number of cancellations, then Headway Gippsland will seek to understand why they are occurring
- Give Headway Gippsland the required notice if you need to end the Service Agreement (see 'Ending this Service Agreement' below for more information)
- Inform Headway Gippsland if your NDIS plan is suspended or replaced by a new NDIS plan or if you stop being a participant in the NDIS
- Adhere to the Headway Gippsland Code of Conduct.
- If Headway Gippsland does not receive your signed service agreement within 14 days of sending a copy of your agreement, we will consider this consent for services.

### Your Safety

Headway Gippsland Inc. strives to provide a safe environment for you and a safe workplace for our staff. We do not tolerate any form of harassment, bullying or discrimination in the workplace. Any form of physical, verbal, sexual or threatening behaviour, intentional or unintentional, is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. Our incident reporting process will be used to manage these situations when/if they arise.

We encourage an environment where participants and staff are treated with dignity and respect and where staff conduct themselves professionally at all times. As a person using our services you have a right to feel safe and be free from abuse and neglect. We have a complaints process which you should use if you feel unsafe. If you feel you need an advocate to make a complaint or report any inappropriate behaviour, we can support you to access an advocate of your choice.

### Pets

Pets must be restrained prior to any Home Care Officer entering the participant's property and for the duration of the visit. Any risk to the Home Care Officer resulting from pets will be viewed as a dangerous work environment. Headway Gippsland reserves the right to withdraw the provision of services to the participant in this situation.

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### Privacy

Headway Gippsland Inc. acknowledges and respects your rights to privacy and is committed to maintaining the confidentiality of your personal information. We use information in line with legislative requirements.

To provide services, we are required to collect a range of personal information. We primarily collect information to assess, plan, and provide quality services to meet your individual needs. If you provide incomplete or inaccurate information to us, we may not be able to provide you with the services you require.

Your personal information also allows us to sustain other internal processes such as health and safety, risk management, account keeping, staff training, quality assurance and to meet government and regulatory requirements where there is a threat to public health.

Headway Gippsland Inc. may at times disclose personal information where it is necessary to deliver services or required by law. We will not rent, trade or sell information about you to third parties. Personal information may only be disclosed outside Headway Gippsland Inc. when you have consented, it is in accordance with the purpose for which we collected the information, and/or we have a legal obligation to do so.

Headway Gippsland Inc. takes all reasonable steps to safeguard the security of personal information from unauthorised use, access, modification or disclosure. Headway Gippsland Inc.'s staff who handle personal information have a duty to protect that information and are granted access on a 'need to know' basis. Personal information no longer required is disposed of appropriately.

You have the right to request access to the personal information that Headway Gippsland Inc. holds about you and to update/change your information as required. To exercise this right please contact Headway Gippsland Inc's Chief Executive Officer on 03 5127 7166

### Feedback, Complaints & Disputes

At Headway Gippsland, we are committed to continuously improving our services and ensuring you feel heard and respected. Your feedback - whether it's a compliment, suggestion, or concern - plays a vital role in helping us grow and better support you. We welcome all types of feedback and encourage open communication. If something isn't meeting your expectations, or if you'd like to acknowledge a positive experience, we're here to listen and respond constructively. You also have the right to involve an advocate to support you through any complaints process.

To provide feedback or raise a concern, please contact: Our CEO or General Manager



Email: [feedback@headwaygippsland.org.au](mailto:feedback@headwaygippsland.org.au)



Phone: 03 5127 7166 (Morwell Office)

If you feel your issue hasn't been resolved or would prefer to speak with an external body, you can contact: National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) – for issues related to your NDIS plan

NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission – for broader concerns or to visit an office in person

We appreciate your input and are dedicated to working with you to find the best possible outcomes.

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### Advocacy

Headway Gippsland Inc. understands that you may wish to have your rights and concerns represented in the course of service delivery. As a participant you have a right to be represented by an advocate at any time and we encourage the use of advocates during the assessment and planning process; advocates can be a family member, friend, medical practitioner or from an advocacy body.

Our Support Coordination Manager can assist you to access the services of an advocacy body. Please see the Advocacy Services list Available on the Office of Public Advocate website [www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au](http://www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au).

### Continuity of Supports

In the event of any unavoidable changes to the provision of supports you receive due to an emergency or disaster occurring, we will implement the following process in an attempt to secure continuity of care in the supports being delivered to you.

Step 1 - If you are supported coordinated through Headway, we will attempt to find suitably qualified and/or experienced workers to fill in on a temporary basis to provide support to you while your regular workers are unavailable.

Step 2 (should Step 1 be or become unworkable) - engage an external agency to provide short term assistance or otherwise recruit for the role.

Where changes or interruptions are unavoidable, we will explain and agree changes with you.

If we provide 1:1 Supports and we are unable to provide services to you during an emergency or disaster occurring, we suggest you contact your LAC, NDIS representative external SC or another service provider.

Further information on our arrangements for providing support in the event of an emergency or disaster are set out in our Continuity of Supports procedure. We are happy to provide these documents to you on request.

### Interpreters

Headway Gippsland Inc. is more than happy to arrange a culturally appropriate and qualified interpreter although there is a fee to the participant for this service.

If you have any further queries, please speak to a member of our team on 03 5127 7166 or visit our website at [www.headwaygippsland.org.au](http://www.headwaygippsland.org.au)

### Freedom from Abuse & Neglect Policy

Headway Gippsland Inc. has in place to provide staff and volunteers with information and training to ensure the safety of people using our service.

To ensure that our staff and volunteers safeguard people who use our services and keep them safe from abuse and neglect we require each staff or volunteer to have a current NDIS Worker Screening check and meet all requirements of Headway Gippsland Inc. recruitment and selection processes.

We recognise the vulnerability of people with disabilities, and acknowledge our duty of care.

### Understanding Abuse & Neglect

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**Physical abuse:** Any non-accidental physical injury or injuries to a child or adult. This includes inflicting pain of any sort or causing bruises, fractures, burns, electric shock, or any unpleasant sensation

**Sexual abuse:** Any sexual contact between an adult and child 16 years of age and younger; or any sexual activity with an adult who is unable to understand, has not given consent, is threatened, coerced or forced to engage in sexual behaviour.

**Psychological or emotional abuse:** Verbal assaults, threats of maltreatment, harassment, humiliation or intimidation, or failure to interact with a person or to acknowledge that person's existence. This may also include denying cultural or religious needs and preferences.

**Constraints and restrictive practices:** Restraining or isolating an adult or child for reasons other than medical necessity or the absence of a less restrictive alternative to prevent self-harm. This may include the use of chemical or physical means or the denial of basic human rights or choices such as religious freedom, freedom of association, access to property or resources or freedom of movement.

**Financial abuse:** The improper use of another person's assets or the use or withholding of another person's resources.

**Legal or civil abuse:** Denial of access to justice or legal systems that are available to other citizens

**Systemic abuse:** Failure to recognise, provide or attempt to provide adequate or appropriate services, including services that are appropriate to that person's age, gender, culture, needs or preferences.

### **Forms of Neglect include (but are not limited to):**

**Physical neglect:** Failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, protection, supervision and medical and dental care, or to place persons at undue risk through unsafe environments or practices.

**Passive neglect:** A caregiver's failure to provide or wilful withholding of the necessities of life including food, clothing, shelter or medical care.

**Wilful deprivation:** Wilfully denying a person who, because of age, health or disability, requires medication or medical care, shelter, food, therapeutic devices or other physical assistance - thereby exposing that person to risk of physical, mental or emotional harm.

**Emotional neglect:** The failure to provide the nurturance or stimulation needed for the social, intellectual and emotional growth or wellbeing of an adult or child.

**Isolation:** A caregiver's failure to recognise and/or report any deterioration of a participant and seek appropriate treatment for participant.

### **Reporting incidents, or suspected incidents of abuse or neglect**

Headway Gippsland has a moral, professional and legal obligation to provide a safe environment for service users. To this purpose staff, volunteers, and families are also made aware of their duty of care, professional boundaries, and reporting obligations including the need to exercise vigilance in reporting any incident, or suspected incident or concern, to the Chief Executive Officer. Mandatory requirements for the reporting of allegations of Physical and Sexual Abuse must be managed by General Manager and Chief Executive Officer in a timely manner as prescribed by funding requirements.

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Every situation will be treated with respect and assessed on the individual circumstances and in accordance with departmental guidelines.

You may access an advocate of your choice when reporting any abuse or neglect.

### **Reporting allegations of physical or sexual assault**

Physical or sexual assault constitutes a Serious Incident and must be immediately reported to the most senior staff member available or the Chief Executive Officer. In the event of such an incident management and staff will be required to refer to/follow the Incident reporting procedure. All suspected, actual or alleged incidents of physical or sexual assault must be reported to a senior member of the Headway Gippsland Inc. team, who will respond in accordance with Government Guidelines.

### **No Smoking Policy**

No smoking is allowed in offices/rooms/spaces used by Headway Gippsland Inc. staff, participants, family members, and volunteers.

When transporting participants, smoking is prohibited in vehicles, participant homes or in a volunteer's / worker's vehicle.

In January 1990 there was a Cabinet (Victorian Government) decision banning smoking in the workplace.

This followed Justice Morling's decision in the High Court that there are direct links between smoking and disease of the airways.

Under Section 21 of the Occupational Health & Safety Act 1985:

"Employers are required to make every effort to provide and maintain a working environment that is safe and without health risk...Recent court decisions also make it important to provide a smoke-free workplace. Failure to do this may leave you open to being sued for any disease or injury caused by passive smoking (e.g. cancer)."

(Legalities Victoria VCOSS 1988)

### **Managing an allegation of abuse**

If the Chief Executive Officer believes that the person is at immediate risk, take whatever steps are required to mitigate the risk and ensure the person's safety while the matter is fully investigated. Staff will follow the Incident Reporting procedure and mandatory reporting procedure. The Chief Executive Officer in consultation with staff and the person, their family, carer or advocate will determine whether to take further action.

Where an allegation is made about a staff member, that person may be removed from duty until the allegation is resolved. Staff members involved in allegations will be supported until that allegation is substantiated or resolved. Staff members will be offered employee assistance.

We will involve family members or advocates where appropriate and requested by the participant and seek the advice and expertise of other professionals and involve other government organisations as required, to determine whether to take or not take action or investigate the allegation.

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The Chief Executive Officer has responsibility to continue to monitor the situation, review at predetermined timeframes record and document the decisions taken and the reasons that led to the decisions.

If the matter involves any actions that are unlawful immediately advise the Chief Executive Officer who will in turn ensure the relevant authorities (police, funding bodies, Disability Services Commissioner) are notified.

Ensure that the person receives the appropriate professional support and counselling as required.

Once the matter has been finalised identify areas of service improvement with the aim of preventing any similar incidences occurring in the future.

Provide people and their families, significant others or advocates feedback and outcomes resulting from the incident.

### Reports of domestic violence

Where staff are informed of domestic violence or suspect that domestic violence is occurring within a family, they should discuss this with the Headway Gippsland Chief Executive Officer. Family members will be supported to access professional organisations which specialise in domestic violence.

Participants may also ring the National Abuse and Neglect Hotline on 1800 880 052

References:

National Disability Insurance Scheme (Incident Management and Reportable Incidents) Rules 2018

Incident Management Systems Detailed Guidance for Registered NDIS Providers June 2019

The National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013.

### Responsibilities

We understand our legal responsibilities including:

**Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.

**Failure to protect:** People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.

Any personnel who are mandatory reporters must comply with their duties.

### Child Safety and Recruitment Statement – Headway Gippsland Inc.

At Headway Gippsland Inc., child safety is our top priority. We have strong human resource practices to recruit the best people and ensure they are suitable for working with children and people with disabilities.

All staff and volunteers must:

- Complete mandatory NDIS Worker Screening and hold a valid Working with Children Check.
- Not appear on the Disability Workers Exclusion database.

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- Sign and follow our Code of Conduct, which outlines expected behaviour when working with children and people with disabilities.

We provide:

- Comprehensive online induction, including training on child safety and abuse risks.
- Ongoing training to identify, assess, and respond to child abuse risks.
- Clear procedures for reporting allegations of abuse, which are handled transparently and with appropriate authorities when needed.

New team members receive regular supervision to ensure they understand and uphold our commitment to child safety. All incidents and concerns are recorded, investigated, and securely stored. Families are kept informed throughout the process.

We promote cultural safety for Aboriginal children, children from diverse backgrounds, and children with disabilities. We welcome applications from people of all backgrounds, including Aboriginal peoples and those with disabilities.

To learn more about Working with Children Checks, visit [www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au).

### **Risk Management**

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in organisations on social media).

It is our legal obligation to report any incidents brought to our attention through the quality and safeguarding portal.

### **Regular Review**

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

### **Allegations, Concerns & Complaints**

Our organisation takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations and report to management of Headway Gippsland Inc...

We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose above).

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If an adult has a reasonable belief that an incident has occurred then they must report the incident. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
- behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- Observing suspicious behaviour.

You can at any time contact: NDIS Quality & Safeguards Commission  
Telephone: 1800 035 544  
Website: [www.ndiscommission.gov.au](http://www.ndiscommission.gov.au)