

Guide to Reasonable and Necessary (R & N) decisions

Mobile phones

Case example

Rebecca doesn't have a telephone or internet service connected to her home. She asks us to fund a mobile phone so she can use the internet to book appointments with her service provider. Rebecca also wants to use the mobile phone to stay in contact with her support coordinator.

Would we fund this?

No, we wouldn't fund a mobile phone or smart phone as they are day-to-day living costs and not NDIS supports. A mobile phone or smart phone is unlikely to be an extra living cost because of your disability support needs.

However, in some situations you can ask to replace an existing NDIS support in your plan with a smart phone. This is known as a replacement support. A replacement support must be for your disability support needs, and it must replace an existing NDIS support or supports in your plan.

For example, if you have complex communication needs and require the use of a smart phone as an alternative communication device, we may be able to fund this as a replacement support in your plan. If you think a mobile phone or smart phone is better for you than another NDIS support, you can ask to replace that support. Only some supports can be replaced. These are listed in the [replacement supports list](#).

You can only spend your funding on a replacement if we have agreed in writing that you can buy this support.

Why wouldn't we fund this?

NDIS laws determine what we can and can't fund. Things we can fund are called NDIS supports. You can use the funding in your plan to buy NDIS supports if they are related to your disability and are in-line with your plan.

Mobile phones and smart phones are a day-to-day living cost. Most Australians have them, and most of the community uses them. A day-to-day living cost is not an NDIS support.

In some specific circumstances, we can fund supports that are not NDIS supports. These are known as [replacement supports](#). A replacement support must meet certain criteria and replace an existing NDIS support in your plan. You can only spend your funding on a replacement if we have approved that you can buy this support. The replacement support must be from the approved [replacement supports list](#).

What else do we think about?

To determine if a smart phone can be considered a replacement support for you, it must meet certain criteria. It must:

- replace an NDIS support or supports in your plan
- help you do the same or more than the NDIS support or supports it's replacing
- cost the same or less than the NDIS support or supports it's replacing.

Case example

Michael has a moderate intellectual disability. He has a support worker who comes to his house every day for four hours. They help Michael with some of his daily living tasks like taking his medications, preparing meals and shopping.

Michael has a smart phone that he takes with him when he goes out to his local footy club without a support worker. He finds that it's difficult using the mobile phone when making phone calls. Michael can only make calls with help from his support worker. He estimates that his support worker spends about an hour a week helping him make calls.

Michael has seen that there's a smart phone available for people with cognitive difficulties. The smart phone has simple, picture-based instructions which make it easy to operate, will not receive calls from scammers, and it can be managed remotely by Michael's support worker when he needs help. Michael has investigated the phone and talked with his doctor about it. They are confident that Michael will be able to use the phone independently and that his mum can help him set it up properly. When Michael has the smart phone, he won't need his support worker to sit with him to make phone calls anymore.

Michael asks us to fund a smart phone as a replacement support with a written recommendation from his doctor and its likely benefits. He also includes a quote for the price of the phone. Michael would like the phone to replace 15 hours of support worker hours from his plan. Over a 12-month period that equates to replacing about 10 minutes per day of support worker hours.

The planner looks at whether:

- it is a replacement support from the pre-approved [replacement supports list](#). If the replacement support is not on this list, you won't be able to ask for it
- it will replace an NDIS support or supports in Michael's plan
- it will help Michael do the same or more than the NDIS support or supports it's replacing
- it costs the same or less than the NDIS support or supports it's replacing.

In Michael's case, the planner decides that:

- a smart phone used for communication and accessibility needs is on the replacement support list
- the mobile phone will be a support that will help Michael make phone calls that his support worker is currently helping him with

- the support will increase Michael's independence because he will be able to use the smart phone when his support worker is not with him
- the replacement of a small amount of Michael's support worker hours for the smart phone will not present any great risk for Michael.

The planner approves funding for the mobile phone as a replacement support.

For more information, go to:

- [Our Guideline – Reasonable and necessary supports](#)
- [Our Guideline – Assistive Technology](#)
- [Replacement supports list.](#)