NDIA teams up with The Salvation Army Project 614 Café Melbourne to support the city’s most vulnerable

Posted on:
7 May 2025

The NDIA has teamed up with The Salvation Army Project 614 Café Melbourne to ensure the city’s most vulnerable get the support they need to access and navigate the NDIS.

Every weekday, from 9am to 1pm, 2 NDIA planners attend the café to work alongside The Salvation Army staff, other government services and allied health professionals.

Working collectively, they provide a person-centred wraparound service for an estimated 600 vulnerable Melbournians who visit daily for shelter, a meal and a chat.

Brendan, Commanding Officer of The Salvation Army Melbourne said The Salvation Army, like the NDIA, is committed to addressing social isolation and homelessness for people with significant and permanent disability.

Working with café coordinator Matthew Daniels, the pair said the idea behind the café is to bring people together over food. Vital on-the-spot support services are provided in the less formal setting, so staff can mix with patrons and support them while they are there.

‘Many of our patrons are dealing with acquired brain injuries and complex mental health conditions. They don’t trust government services, so to have the NDIA and Services Australia working at the café with other support services, is just terrific,’ Brendan said.

During their shift NDIA staff talk to patrons about the NDIS. They help them to understand whether they may be eligibility for the NDIS.

If they are participants, they help with any questions or concerns and follow-up to ensure the participant isn’t experiencing any disadvantage.

Natalie and Felicity are 2 of the 10 NDIA planners who work regularly at the café, and they have been there since the beginning when the 2 groups first partnered.

Both women said it is “such a rewarding experience” and Natalie said it’s helped staff to build strong rapport with regulars, even patrons who aren’t NDIS participants.

‘When we are there, patrons often call out to say hello which is nice,’ Natalie said.

Felicity said it’s a real positive team environment too. ‘We all link in with each other because these patrons are vulnerable. They are at risk of disengaging, so we do our best to make sure they get the best possible experience,’ she said.

Both woman said a common concern the NDIA team often faces at the café is learning participants are changing their providers regularly or cancelling their services.

'This can put them at risk, so when they come into the café we can help,' Natalie said.

'We can talk to them about their needs, connect them to their local area coordinator for additional support or include support coordination in their plan if they feel they need it.'

Working from The Salvation Army Project 614 Café Melbourne since August 2023, the entire NDIA planning team said they have had so many great results, "Way too many to mention," making a difference in the lives of patrons, ensuring they feel valued and heard.

Related Stories and videos

Keely and Nathan are enjoying learning to cook and managing their own money

Team Lemonade sparks joy, confidence and independence

8 April 2021
Wodonga NDIS participant, Marc Hutchings, used his NDIS funding to engage Everyday Independence and it's built a team of disability and health professionals around him.

NDIS funds build person-centred support team around Marc

29 September 2021
Tamina has an important message to share

Tamina walks tall in life and business, thanks to NDIS supports

8 March 2023
More stories and videos