

Family Handbook

Early Intervention—Vision



Hello

**We're glad
you've found us!**

Wherever you are in
Australia—and wherever you
are in your journey to support
your child—we're here for you.

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How do I help my child navigate the world?

We want you and your child to share the fun and joy of communicating effectively with each other.

To achieve that, they need a strong foundation for learning and communication.

If your child is blind or has low vision, NextSense provides early intervention services to support the important steps that will guide you and your child on the path to achieving their potential.

How NextSense can support you and your child

For children who are blind or have low vision, tailored opportunities for early learning, as part of an early intervention program, build confidence and set the foundations for higher learning and critical life skills.

Your child is unique, so we work with you to design a tailored program that meets their needs, developing the communication, language and social skills that will support your child and family at every stage.

Through play, daily routines and meaningful experiences, we work with you to support your child's development in preparation for school. This may involve focusing on braille literacy, low vision aid training, assistive technology and therapies.

Supported by the latest evidence, our programs help you access the right early intervention support for your child, from when their low vision or blindness is identified onwards.



A team of experts in your corner

Working with us, you don't just get one highly qualified professional, you get an entire team in your corner.



Who we are

NextSense is a not-for-profit organisation supporting people who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind or have low vision across Australia.

We work with children, adults and their families to educate and create an individual program of care that meets their unique needs. We're a registered NDIS provider, and we work with you and your family to help your child achieve their goals and potential.

With the support of generous donations, NextSense provides vital support for children and adults, more cochlear implants than any other service in Australia, and is a world leader for research, technology and professional education in our field.

Take the next step



 **1300 581 391**

 **hello@nextsense.org.au**

We'll connect you with an experienced team member to discuss your needs.

Every year, we work with families to provide support to

1000+

children who are blind or have low vision

The number of children who are blind or have low vision supported by NextSense has increased by

100%

in the last seven years*

*at 2021

Get the support and tools you need

—in your language

With NextSense Early Intervention services, you can access the right support for you, your child and family.

Our services are designed for children from birth to eight years of age and their families to develop strong foundations for learning and communication. We can continue to support you after your child turns eight, based on the goals you identify.

We support children who are blind or have low vision across Australia. We also support children with multiple disabilities, including children who are deafblind.

And just as your child's needs change over time, we can adjust the support we provide.

We understand that the best language for your child to learn is the language you use at home. That's why we provide interpreter services as needed during early intervention sessions, usually at no cost to you.

Together with you, we can help your child explore their world, by:

-  providing a holistic service for you and your child
-  developing early exploration and mobility skills
-  creating opportunities for meaningful interactions
-  teaching concepts typically learnt through vision
-  fostering early literacy through braille, large print, low vision aids and/or assistive technology.

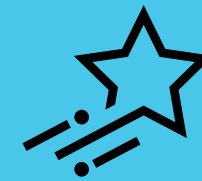
Why NextSense



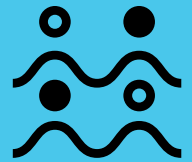
Support tailored to your child and family's goals



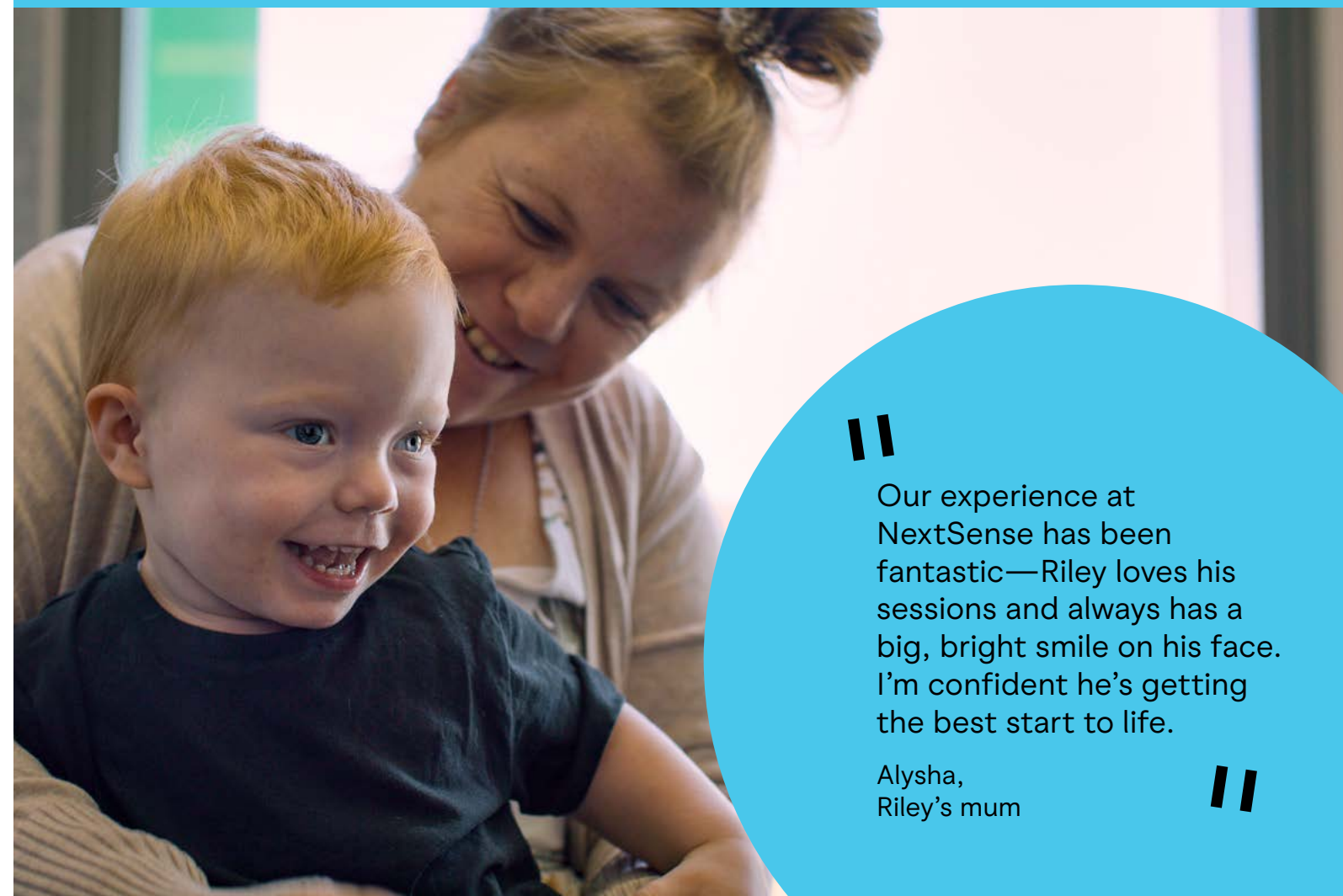
Gain the confidence to make decisions to support your child



Resources, knowledge and the tools to help your child achieve their potential



Connect with a network—other families, professionals and education specialists



“

Our experience at NextSense has been fantastic—Riley loves his sessions and always has a big, bright smile on his face. I'm confident he's getting the best start to life.

Alysha,
Riley's mum

”



How we work with you

To help your child learn, grow and thrive, our approach is:

Respectful

We value and respect your child and family's unique and specific strengths.



Family centred

We build your capacity to support your child in your everyday activities, giving your child many more learning opportunities.

Evidence based

We're committed to delivering services based on national and international best practice principles and the latest evidence. We challenge ourselves to keep learning so we can support you better.



Proactive

Early identification and intervention are key to helping your child develop their communication and reach all of their other developmental milestones. We can support your family to do this.

Learning in everyday life

We want early intervention to be meaningful, functional and fun. We know that children learn best when they are having fun and when early intervention goals are integrated into daily routines and community activities.



Language and communication foundations

Start learning early

With quality support early in your child's life, you can help them build the foundations for a love of learning, communicating, exploring the world around them and interacting with others. For many children, early intervention can lead to needing fewer supports later in life, more confidence, better inclusion, independence and increased participation in everyday activities.

Talk, read, play, sing

Your child actively learns through everyday activities and play, and our programs support you to develop fun and engaging learning experiences. Early childhood is a time of rapid (and exciting!) development for growing children. Early intervention guides and supports your child through this important phase.

Partnering with you

We give you the tools, knowledge and understanding to nurture your child's sensory development early in their life. For children with low vision this may mean providing a stimulating environment to encourage them to use their remaining vision as much as possible. For children who have no functional vision this will involve helping them to use their other senses for learning.

Support wherever you are

—Connected Services

We can come to you in any corner of Australia

We've been connecting with families this way for many years so that those living outside of our service locations can still work with our education specialists.

Just like an in-person session, these virtual sessions provide individualised support from experienced NextSense therapists and teachers, including:

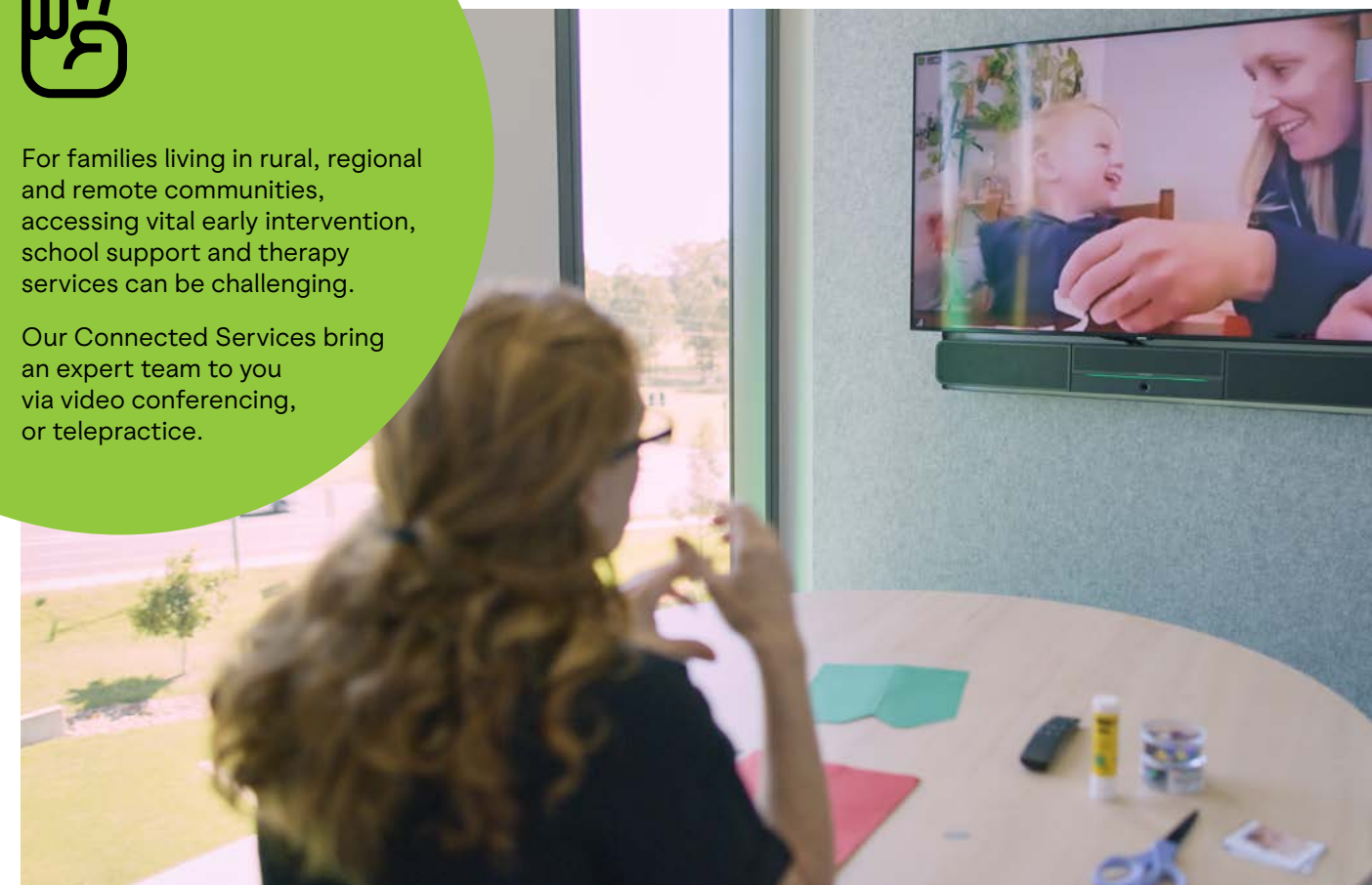
- individual and group sessions
- tools for listening and spoken language development
- Auslan support
- braille tuition and vision loss support
- transition to preschool, school and school support
- a lending library of resources
- residential programs
- parent networking and information.

Learn more at nextsense.org.au



For families living in rural, regional and remote communities, accessing vital early intervention, school support and therapy services can be challenging.

Our Connected Services bring an expert team to you via video conferencing, or telepractice.



What to expect with NextSense



Our early intervention services can support you and your family from the very beginning of your journey with vision loss until the age of eight.



Our evidence-based and goal-focused programs address the listening, language, communication and social skills children need to flourish in their early years.



Your child is unique, and so are their development and learning needs so your child's early intervention program is tailored just for them. It's a unique mix of services and support to help your child achieve their personal potential.

The first step

To develop the right plan for your child, we start by working with you to understand their needs, and through vision and functional assessments.

You will be allocated a key worker then we build the best possible team for your child, which can involve orthoptists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech pathologists and developmental psychologists.



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From the moment we met the team from NextSense and experienced the support we received from them, we knew Rachael's vision impairment would not hold her back from anything. From the in centre early intervention sessions, home visits to the playgroup and preschool support, NextSense has been a wonderful partner on this journey with our family.

Bev,
Rachael's mum

”



Keeping you informed

We host parent information sessions to help you connect with other families, learn from leading specialists and participate in discussions on a range of topics.

Choose your service type

Individual sessions

One on one sessions with a teacher or therapist are fun, stimulating and goal-directed to promote your child's sensory development, early literacy and mobility. You'll be involved in all aspects of the session and can learn how to incorporate the same goals into your daily routine at home. You can ask questions and chat with your child's teacher/therapist about your child, their progress and your experiences.



Develop key life skills

An early intervention program will give your child the best start to develop key life skills, including:



sensory skills



braille literacy



social skills



play skills.

Support for children in the community

To make sure your child has the support they need beyond your home environment and your sessions with us, we can also provide support at your childcare centre or preschool.

And when your child is ready to start school, NextSense School Support can help children attending independent schools to transition and access their school curriculum, helping them succeed in their school setting.

Group programs

Held at select NextSense centres, various early intervention groups are available for your child based on their needs. Children play together and get involved with early literacy, music or getting ready for school.

They're a chance to build friendships, learn through play and have fun.

Groups are also an opportunity to connect with other families, as together you'll learn new ways to support your child's development. Share experiences and learn more about blindness, low vision, child development, education services, assistive technologies and a range of topics that can help you on your journey.



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Someone once told us that life is a journey and that having a child with special needs leads you on a different path than you thought you would be on. We truly value the support we receive from the staff at NextSense and look forward to continuing our journey with them with whatever comes our way.

Vanessa,
Massimo's mum

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Expert team around your child and family

With NextSense you don't just get one highly qualified professional—you get an entire team around your child. And just as your child's program is customised depending on their needs, so too is the team supporting you.

A key worker

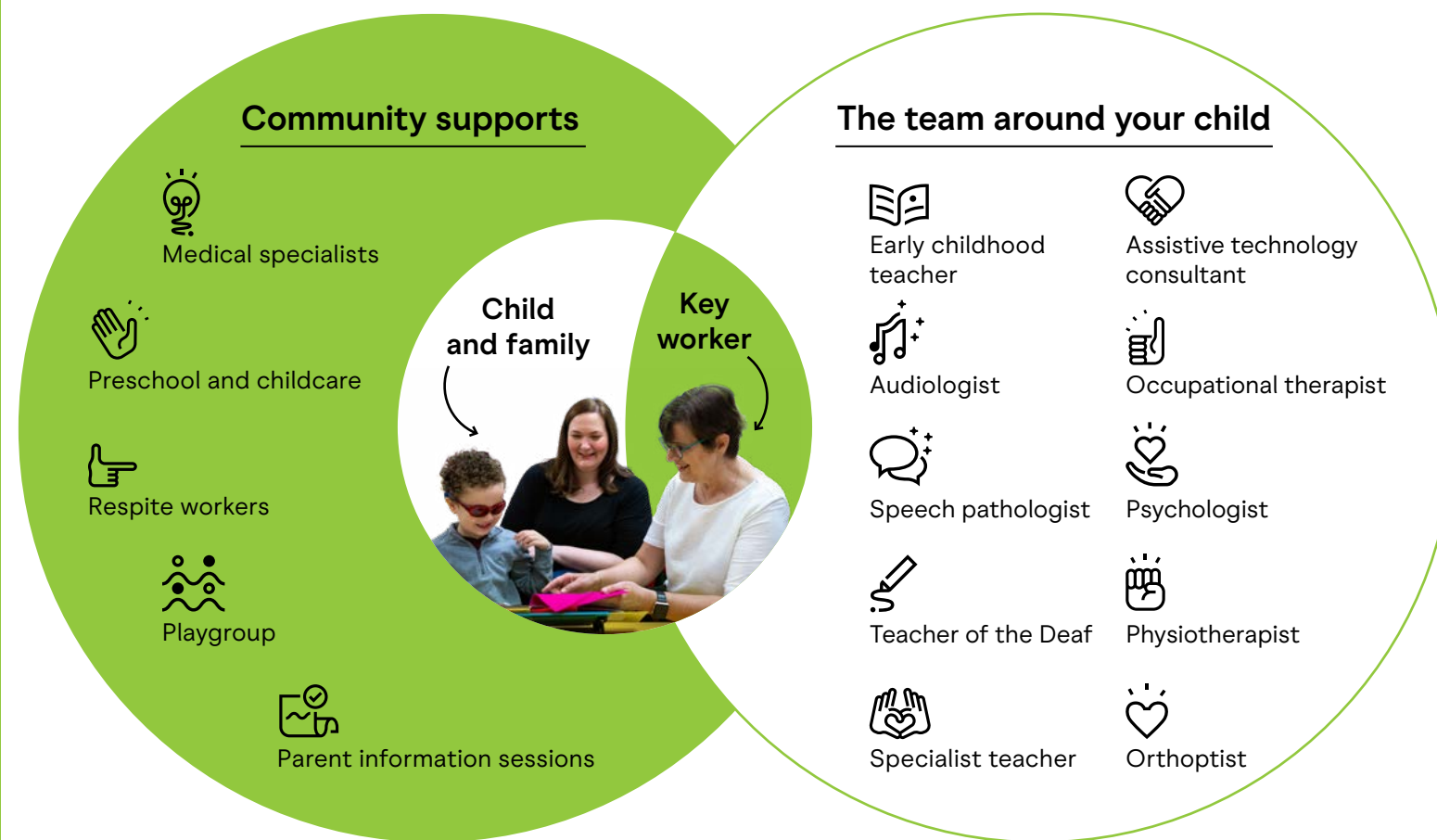
To make sure you experience the best possible early intervention for your child a member of our team, known as your key worker, will work with you and your family.

Your key worker will be an occupational therapist, teacher of vision impairment or early childhood educator that can help you to understand your child's early development and learning needs. They work with your family, other NextSense team members that are specialists in their fields as well as your child's community supports to ensure your child can achieve their personal potential.

Your key worker will provide early intervention and coordinate the rest of your specialised team at NextSense, as needed.

What your key worker does

-  Provides early intervention and a plan tailored to your child's needs to help your child have a range of experiences in everyday life.
-  Assists with coordination of the information, services and supports around your child and family.
-  Helps your family to implement strategies from the team around your child into your daily routines.
-  Supports your child and family every step of the way.
-  Helps your child get ready for big school.

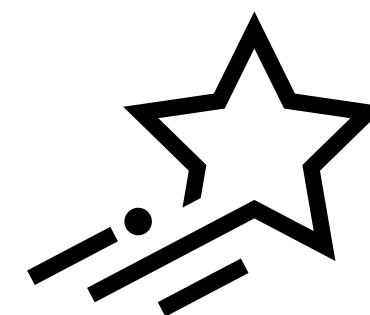


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Jackson's in great hands. At NextSense, the team have Jackson's needs at the centre of everything they do. Because of their great support, Jackson is an energetic, happy little boy who's learning to discover the world around him.

Sara,
Jackson's mum

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Support at every stage



Alongside early intervention, NextSense provides a range of vision services, supporting children, adults and their families at every stage.

Vision Assessments

Our specialist eye health professionals can assess your child's vision and our assistive technology consultants will work with you to develop strategies and access to technology to best support your goals.

NextSense Blind and Low Vision Preschool

Our accessible preschool program is for children who are blind or have low vision. Children learn about concepts, early numeracy and literacy, mobility, independence and assistive technology.

NextSense School

NextSense School ensures your child has access to a high-quality curriculum in an inclusive environment. NextSense School—Blind and Deafblind Program, supports your child with orientation and mobility, braille literacy and access to information, technology and learning aids so your child can participate fully in their educational setting.

School Support

Students who are blind or have low vision and go to an independent school can receive support from NextSense. This may include regular classroom visits, assessment and guidance on low-vision aids and assistive technologies, and training and development for teachers.

Accessibility and Inclusion

Our Accessibility and Inclusion service produces a range of materials in formats that can be used by people who are blind or have low vision. We produce children's books, exam papers, and assessments through to restaurant menus for individuals, community groups and organisations.

Allied Health

We provide a range of allied health services for children and adults who are blind or have low vision, including diagnosis, functional assessments, speech therapy and occupational therapy. These services are holistic in focus and can address additional disabilities. For families with a NextSense Early Intervention program, these services can be coordinated by your key worker.

NextSense innovations

You can't remain a world-leader without constantly innovating. So we're always pushing ourselves to go further, enhance our thinking, and better our clients' experience.

We've developed vision resources to support children, adults, families and health professionals—resources such as apps, iBooks and networking resources.



Find them
here

nextsense.org.au

Learn braille online

NextSense created UEBOnline, the world's first online learning braille course which is leading the way by using technology to support braille literacy both in Australia and internationally.

Find out more at uebonline.org



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Now I can help Charlie with his homework, something that every parent wants to be able to do for their child. It sounds simple, but things like that are essential to Charlie's language and literacy development.

Julian,
Charlie's Dad

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● Alisha using the Listen and Learn app from NextSense

Play and learn at home with our apps

We've developed a range of apps that can help you and your child continue to learn together. We're constantly working to bring you new, innovative education tools, which you can download from our website.

Popular apps for people who are blind or have low vision and their families, include:



Discover the Park

Introducing children who are blind or have low vision to Apple's popular VoiceOver software in a fun park environment.



Adapting Signs

An adaptive approach to signing for those who are blind or have low vision and additional needs.

What you need to know



NextSense is an NDIS Registered Provider

We're here to support you to navigate the NDIS, so you can receive the services and resources you and your family need.

Funding


If your child is blind or has vision loss, you may be able to receive support from the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

The NDIS supports families to help children develop the skills they need to take part in daily activities and achieve the best possible outcomes throughout their life.

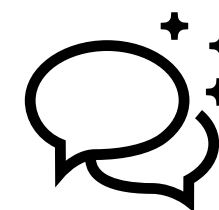
You can access the right support for you, your child and your family, using your NDIS funding with NextSense Early Intervention services. An NDIS Early Childhood Partner will discuss your child's individual circumstances and help you with NDIS access and a plan.

Contact our dedicated client care team to find out more:



 1300 581 391

 hello@nextsense.org.au



Share your feedback

We always welcome feedback. You can share yours at any one of our centres or email us at hello@nextsense.org.au

Your rights

We aim to provide the very highest level of care, support and respect for people with hearing or vision loss, their families and the community.

As a client of NextSense, you have the right to:

- be treated with respect and courtesy
- stay informed and be consulted
- have a say in decisions made about your care and make informed choices
- receive quality services and receive information in alternate formats on the same basis as your peers
- expect privacy and confidentiality and access to all personal information held
- have another person of your choice support you and advocate (speak up for you) on your behalf
- have comments and feedback valued
- make a confidential complaint if you are not happy with the services you receive
- be supported through your journey with NextSense.

To find out more, visit our website

nextsense.org.au

Have you registered your child on the Australian Childhood Vision Impairment Register (ACVIR)?

The ACVIR collects data that helps build an accurate picture of the number of children who are blind or have low vision in Australia.

Sponsored by NextSense, and founded in partnership with families, health professionals, educators and agencies, the register gives providers and researchers access to data to increase vital services, support funding requests and provide targeted support to the community.

For more information on the register visit vifamilynetwork.org.au

NextSense Institute

Research for today and tomorrow

To bring you and your family the best possible support and tools that enrich your child's experiences and your family's communication, we partner with leading practitioners and researchers.

NextSense Institute is Australia's leading centre for research and professional studies in the field of education for children with sensory disabilities.

We're always pushing ourselves to go further, enhance our thinking, and better our clients' experience.

We're committed to research and innovation, harnessing the latest technology and new ways of thinking, and educating the next generation of experts to lead the way.

Parents of children with hearing or vision loss, carers, educators, and health professional can access our webinars, short courses, and degree programs.

NextSense Institute conducts world-leading research in affiliation with Macquarie University, along with our postgraduate program.

Go to nextsense.org.au to find out more about our research and professional education opportunities.



1000+

professionals from around the world have received qualifications through **NextSense** Institute.



The NextSense difference

Advancing 160 years' experience

We've been providing services since 1860, with an eye on the innovation of tomorrow.

For everyone, right across Australia

No matter your age, your needs, or where you live, we reach people who need us.

Not-for-profit service

We're not for profit. That means we can focus on your needs.

Care for children, individuals, and families

We pride ourselves on collaborating with families, building relationships, and supporting a whole community.

Holistic support from an expert team

Our wide range of experts work holistically to create your unique program of care, coordinated by a key worker, who ensures your services, care and goals are integrated across your team.

Registered NDIS provider

We partner with you on your NDIS journey.

Australia's largest cochlear implant program

We provide access to leading professionals and ongoing care for thousands of Australians.

World leading research and education

Discover our specialist postgraduate and continuing professional education programs.



Our purpose

We exist to enhance lives by working with people who have hearing and vision loss, so together we can redefine what's possible.



Take the next step



1300 581 391



hello@nextsense.org.au

We'll connect you with an
experienced team member
to discuss your needs.