

NDIS · COMPLIANCE · EVIDENCE

NDIS Record Keeping: The Note Written a Fortnight Late

Your most experienced support worker resigns on a Friday. Everything they knew about a participant that was never written down leaves with them at 5pm.

Disability services run on conversations, and conversations are the least documented thing in most organisations. Under the NDIS Practice Standards, records must be **accurate, complete and contemporaneous**, written at the time, not reconstructed a fortnight later. They must be kept at **least seven years**, and for a participant under 18, **until they turn 25**. Reportable incidents run a **24-hour notification and five-business-day report** clock that starts the moment your organisation *becomes aware*, almost always a phone call. Yet in the average service, shift notes are strong and telephone contact is invisible: the intake enquiry, the after-hours call to a manager's mobile, the family member who rang upset and was never logged as a complaint.

The short version

Requirement	The rule	Where providers slip
Information management	Practice Standard Outcome 2.4. Records must be accurate, complete, stored securely, accessible to those who need them and protected from those who do not.	Records exist but are scattered across five systems, so producing a single participant history takes half a day.
Contemporaneous	Created at the time of the event or immediately after it.	Batch write-ups on Friday afternoon covering the whole week. The timestamps make it obvious.
Seven-year retention	Minimum seven years for records, including incident notifications and their supporting documentation.	Retention living in someone's head rather than being enforced by the system.
Under-18 participants	Records kept until the person turns 25, which for a ten-year-old is fifteen years.	Choosing platforms with no realistic export path, so the obligation outlives the software.
Incident management	Record <i>all</i> incidents, not just reportable ones: what happened, what was done, how it resolved.	Near-misses and minor incidents never captured, so trends are invisible until they are not.
Complaints	Recorded, actioned and closed with a trail, including verbal complaints.	A register with three entries a year, which tells an auditor about your capture rate rather than your quality.

■ Also worth knowing

Pattern	What it costs you
Personal mobiles for participant contact	The worst of the four. No log, no recording, no organisational access. The number belongs to the worker, so when they resign the participant keeps ringing a phone your service does not.
After-hours diverted to a manager's handset	The most operationally significant calls you take are the least visible. And the 24-hour reportable incident clock starts on one of them.
One general number for everything	Intake, complaints, rosters and sales all in one undifferentiated log, so the log cannot evidence anything specific.
Notes typed later, if at all	Not contemporaneous, less accurate than the writer believes, and the first thing to be skipped when the day runs long.

The pattern hiding in that table

Look at where each obligation is triggered. An incident is usually first reported by a worker *ringing* someone. A complaint usually arrives as a *call* from a family member who never says the word complaint. A plan change is *discussed* before it is documented. Written records are downstream of conversations, and the conversation is the part almost nobody captures.

■ Questions the full guide answers

- ☐ How long must NDIS providers keep participant records?
- ☐ What counts as a contemporaneous record?
- ☐ What are the NDIS reportable incident timeframes?
- ☐ Is recording calls with participants and families legal in Australia?
- ☐ Should support workers use personal mobiles to contact participants?
- ☐ Can AI-generated notes be used as the official participant record?
- ☐ What is the highest-value change we can make before our next audit?

This is the summary. The guide has the detail.

Every point above is worked through in full on our site, with the Australian context, the numbers and the exceptions. If you would rather talk it through, call 1300 663 222 or visit vocphone.com/about/contact-us.