GOOD COMPANY DISABILITY SERVICES

NDIS Community Participation in Perth

Activities, social groups and what your funding covers — a practical guide for participants, families and support workers, written by the Good Company team in WA.

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How to read the tags: FREE costs nothing $ low cost (under about $15) ACCESS good wheelchair & mobility access BOOK book or ring ahead

💡 Every gold-underlined phrase is a live link — tap it to go straight to the booking page, group or source. Use your PDF reader's bookmarks panel to jump between sections. Yellow **KEY POINT** boxes carry the one thing to remember from each section.

Why we wrote this guide

Perth is one of the easiest cities in Australia to be out and about in — flat, sunny most of the year, with free public transport through the city centre and a river that puts a path, a park or a jetty within reach of almost every suburb. Yet "what should we actually do this week?" is still the question we hear most, from participants, from families, and from support workers staring down a Tuesday with no plan.

This guide is our answer: what community participation means in plain English, the social groups genuinely worth knowing about, free and low-cost outings sorted by region, activities that build real skills, and what your funding can and can't pay for. Everything in here is drawn from what our mentors and participants actually do, week in and week out, from Joondalup down to Mandurah.

Use this guide in 60 seconds

- **Participants and families** — start with the groups list (section 3), pick one thing that matches an interest, and check the funding table (section 6) before booking.
- **Support workers** — go straight to the region lists (section 4) for this week's plan, then steal the sample week in section 7.
- **Planning a review?** Read the funding section and FAQ first — the October 2026 changes reward preparation.

What "community participation" actually means

> KEY POINT Core funding helps you *do* the thing; Capacity Building funding helps you *get better at doing* the thing.

Strip away the jargon and community participation means one thing: being part of ordinary life in your own city. Catching the train to the footy. Belonging to a club. Doing a course. Swimming at the same beach as everyone else. The NDIS funds support to make that possible when disability would otherwise get in the way.

In an NDIS plan, it usually shows up in two places:

- **Core — Assistance with Social, Economic and Community Participation.** Pays for a support worker or mentor to help you take part — one-to-one or in a group. Flexible: the same funding covers the museum on Tuesday and basketball on Thursday.
- **Capacity Building — Increased Social and Community Participation.** Pays for supports that build skills to participate more independently over time — a mentoring program, a life-skills course, coaching toward joining a club on your own.

One honest note about 2026. The *Securing the NDIS for Future Generations Act 2026* passed in August, and from 1 October 2026 budgets for social and community participation supports are being adjusted downwards as plans are reassessed or renewed, phasing in over about twelve months (Department of Health, Disability and Ageing). Daily living supports like personal care aren't affected, but participation budgets are tightening. Two practical consequences: activities need a clear link to the goals written in your plan, and free or low-cost activities — which Perth has in genuine abundance — matter more than ever. This guide leans hard into both.

Social groups and clubs in Perth, by interest

KEY POINT Build participation around something you already care about — interest first, diagnosis second. One phone call to any organisation below usually leads somewhere useful.

Sport and movement

- Rebound WA, Shenton Park ACCESS BOOK — wheelchair basketball, rugby and AFL, plus come-and-try days. You don't need your own chair; they have loan equipment.
- Inclusion WA — mentoring that helps people join mainstream local sport and community clubs. If the goal is "a real club, not a disability program," start here.
- Special Olympics WA $ — weekly athletics, swimming, basketball and bocce across Perth metro clubs, for people with intellectual disability.
- Riding for the Disabled WA BOOK — horse riding and horsemanship at metro centres including Brigadoon and Carine. Waitlists are real; ring early.
- **Council recreation centres** $ — most run all-abilities programs (gym intros, swim squads, social sport). Ask for the **access and inclusion officer** — nearly every Perth council has one.

Arts, music and performance

- DADAA, Fremantle & Midland ACCESS — WA's flagship arts and disability organisation: visual arts studios, film, dance and exhibitions where participants are the artists, not the audience.
- **Community art centres** $ — many councils run low-cost term classes (ceramics, painting, choir) that welcome support workers at no extra charge.

Social and peer groups

- Autism Association of WA — social and recreation groups for autistic teens and adults, grouped by age and interest, from gaming nights to weekend outings.
- ConnectGroups FREE — WA's directory of peer support groups. Whatever the situation — acquired brain injury, MS, chronic pain, carers — there's almost certainly a Perth group, and ConnectGroups will find it.
- Act Belong Commit FREE — WA's mental wellbeing campaign runs an online activity finder that filters by suburb. An underrated planning tool for support workers.

Sensory and communication-specific

- VisAbility, Victoria Park — social and recreation programs for people who are blind or have low vision.
- Access Plus WA Deaf — community events and groups for Deaf and hard-of-hearing West Australians; the WA Deaf Recreation Association runs social sport.

MENTOR'S TIP

Don't audition the whole list. Pick one group, go three times before judging it, and keep the support worker's role small and shrinking — the aim is that the group becomes yours, not another appointment.

Mainstream social activities that welcome everyone

KEY POINT Disability-specific groups aren't the destination — they're a doorway. Many participants do best in ordinary community activities, with support at the entry point and a plan for it to fade.

These are the mainstream options our mentors reach for first, because they're structured enough to make conversation easy and regular enough to turn strangers into familiar faces.

- **parkrun** FREE ACCESS — a timed 5km every Saturday morning at dozens of Perth locations, and nothing like a race: walkers welcome, wheelchairs welcome on the flatter river courses, and a volunteer tail walker means nobody finishes last. Volunteering (marshalling, scanning barcodes) is just as social as walking it.
- **Heart Foundation Walking groups** FREE — volunteer-led local walks, usually 30–60 minutes with coffee after. The coffee is the point.
- **Community gardens & Perth City Farm** FREE — volunteer mornings where shared tasks do the social heavy lifting; shoulder-to-shoulder beats face-to-face for many people, autistic adults often included.
- **Men's Sheds** $ — woodwork, repairs and company across dozens of Perth sheds; the same shoulder-to-shoulder principle, with power tools.
- **Pub trivia & board game cafés** $ — structured, team-based socialising where the game supplies the conversation. Teams almost always want an extra player; cafés run open nights for solo newcomers.
- **Social sport leagues** $ — beginner-friendly mixed leagues (Urban Rec-style dodgeball, netball, bowling) built for people who haven't played since school. Low stakes, same faces weekly.
- **Community choirs & beginner dance classes** $ — no experience or partner needed, and attendance is the only skill required for the first month.
- **Meetup & Facebook interest groups** FREE — filter Perth groups by the actual interest (anime, fishing, photography, Lego). A support worker messaging the organiser about access needs almost always gets a warm yes — most groups have simply never been asked.
- **Markets & car boot sales** FREE — as a regular visitor or a stallholder. Stall neighbours become familiar faces fast, which is why this pairs so well with a micro-enterprise goal.
- **Fishing jetties** FREE ACCESS — Woodman Point's Ammo Jetty and other metro jetties have flat access and a built-in community of regulars happy to talk tackle.

MENTOR'S TIP

How to pick between mainstream and disability-specific: does it match a real interest? What support is needed just at the entry point (transport, introductions, the first three visits)? What's the fade plan? If the answers are "yes, a little, and within a term" — go mainstream. That's community participation in its truest form, and Inclusion WA exists to help make exactly that bridge.

Free and low-cost activities, region by region

KEY POINT Plan in your own corner of the city — funding goes to participation, not travel time. Everything below is free or under about $15 unless noted.

Perth CBD and the river

- **Kings Park** FREE ACCESS — still the best free day out in the city. The Lotterywest Federation Walkway (treetop bridge) is fully wheelchair accessible; the war memorial lookout delivers every time. Weekday mornings are quiet.
- **Perth Cultural Centre** FREE ACCESS — WA Museum Boola Bardip (free general entry), Art Gallery of WA and the State Library sit side by side in Northbridge: one accessible precinct, three rainy-day options. Ask the museum about its quieter sensory-friendly sessions.
- **Elizabeth Quay & Matagarup Bridge** FREE ACCESS — flat, step-free riverside walking with seating, coffee and people-watching. Cross the bridge to Optus Stadium's parklands.
- **The free CAT buses** FREE ACCESS — all four CBD loops are wheelchair accessible, and a genuinely good outing for building public-transport confidence before tackling the wider Transperth network.
- **The South Perth ferry** $ — a few dollars from Elizabeth Quay to Mends Street; the foreshore opposite has the best skyline view in the city, and the City of South Perth lends a free beach wheelchair.

Northern suburbs

- **Scarborough foreshore** FREE ACCESS — wide flat promenades, the accessible Scarborough Beach Pool, summer night markets. The City of Stirling has trialled beach matting at Trigg.
- **Hillarys Boat Harbour** FREE — sheltered swimming beach, flat boardwalks, and enough happening that a visit never feels like an exercise.
- **Whiteman Park** FREE — free entry, accessible paths, picnic areas and a vintage tram; Caversham Wildlife Park inside is paid, but the park alone fills a day.
- **Lake Monger & Herdsman Lake** FREE ACCESS — flat sealed loops, black swans, good benches. Reliable, repeatable, free.
- **Yanchep National Park** $ — small per-car fee; koalas, kangaroos on the lawns, an accessible boardwalk. Best in wildflower season.

Southern suburbs and Fremantle

- **Fremantle** FREE — markets (Fri–Sun), the Esplanade, Bathers Beach and the Fishing Boat Harbour, all walkable and mostly step-free. Go early on market days — by 11am the crowds make narrow aisles hard work.
- **Cottesloe** FREE BOOK — a free bookable beach wheelchair, and dedicated beach access days with matting during Sculpture by the Sea each March. MSWA's WA beach access guide covers the rest of the coast.
- **Point Walter, Bicton** FREE — the sandbar, the jetty, shady lawns and a flat foreshore path. One of the river's best picnic spots.
- **Canning River Regional Park, Wilson** FREE — wetland boardwalks and the Eco Education Centre. Quiet, sensory-friendly, free.
- **Mandurah foreshore** $ ACCESS — an hour south by accessible train. Flat boardwalks, resident dolphins that show up often enough to feel like a promise, and fish and chips with seagull negotiations included.

Eastern suburbs and the hills

- **Swan Valley** FREE — food trails where tastings cost nothing: chocolate, nougat, honey. Flat sites, easy parking, and a route that works brilliantly as a half-day drive.

- **Guildford** FREE — heritage streetscape, antique shops and cafes, 20 minutes from town on the accessible Midland line.
- **John Forrest NP & Mundaring Weir** $ — lookouts reachable by car for those who can't manage trails; proper bushland an easy drive from the eastern suburbs.
- **Kalamunda** FREE — monthly Sunday markets, a village feel, and the Zig Zag scenic drive down Gooseberry Hill — spectacular, and it requires nothing more than a car seat.

Getting there: transport in one paragraph

All Transperth trains and the CAT buses are wheelchair accessible, and a WA Companion Card means your support person travels free on Transperth. For anyone building independent travel skills, the train network is the place to practise — stations are staffed at the city end, and a mentor can fade from "travelling with" to "meeting at the other end" over a few weeks.

> **MENTOR'S TIP**
> Alternate "anchor" outings (the zoo, a festival, Mandurah) with cheap repeatable locals (the lake loop, the library, the foreshore). Repetition is where confidence and independence actually grow — and under the tighter 2026 budgets, it's what makes a plan last the year.

Sensory-friendly Perth and other access wins

> **KEY POINT** A handful of Perth features make outings dramatically easier — sensory cinema sessions, carer-goes-free venues, Changing Places toilets — and almost no guide collects them in one place.

- **Sensory-friendly cinema sessions** $ — Grand Cinemas Armadale, Ace Cinemas Midland and Hoyts run lights-up, sound-down screenings for autistic and sensory-sensitive moviegoers — and at most major chains a Companion Card means the carer's ticket is free. Ask for the sensory session calendar at your nearest cinema.
- **Piney Lakes Sensory Play Park, Winthrop** FREE — a purpose-built sensory playground and one of Perth's best-kept secrets for younger participants.
- **Kwinana Adventure Park** FREE ACCESS — six play zones, sensory equipment, an accessible splash pad, and a carousel with two-seat carriages so a support worker can ride alongside.
- Fishability FREE ACCESS — supported fishing days across Perth, and their website map marks spots with accessible parking, toilets and flat access. Pairs perfectly with the jetties above.
- **Changing Places toilets** — full-size adult change facilities with hoists, far beyond a standard accessible toilet. Perth's first opened at Elizabeth Quay; the national map lists the rest. If a standard accessible toilet doesn't work for someone, plan longer outings around these.
- **Measured accessible trails** FREE ACCESS — when "is it really accessible?" matters, use trails with known numbers: Woodloes Walk (6 km, fully accessible) and the Butterflies, Birds and Bridges Trail (4 km) in Canning River Regional Park, the 800 m sealed North Mindarie coastal trail, and Kings Park's Lotterywest Federation Walkway.

Access details verified November 2026 — sessions and facilities change, so always ring ahead.

Activities that build skills, not just fill time

KEY POINT The best participation does double duty: enjoyable now, *and* it moves a plan goal forward. Start smaller than feels impressive, repeat weekly, let support fade as skill grows.

- **Volunteering.** Volunteering WA lists hundreds of Perth roles and matches around access needs. Op shops, animal shelters, community gardens and event crews are reliable starting points — regular shifts build routine, references and workmates. Good Sammy is the WA institution here, employing and training people with disability across its stores.
- **Short courses at TAFE.** North and South Metropolitan TAFE run short courses and skill sets — barista basics, first aid, digital skills — with disability support services on every campus. A six-week course is a low-stakes test of whether study or a job in that field is the next goal.
- **The gym, done properly.** Council rec centres cost far less than commercial gyms and most offer inclusive programs. The goal isn't "attend the gym" — it's "walk in, scan your own card, do your own program." That version builds independence you keep.
- **Micro-enterprise.** Some of the most motivating goals we support are tiny businesses — a candle stall at the Kalamunda markets, a lawn-mowing round, dog treats sold online. Casual market stalls are cheap, which makes them a perfect low-risk testing ground. If this sparks something, our micro-enterprise program was built for exactly this.
- **Work experience and job sampling.** Short supported stints — a morning a week stacking shelves or watering plants at a nursery — let someone try work before committing. These often start with nothing more formal than a mentor asking a shop owner.
- **Libraries.** Free, air-conditioned, genuinely welcoming, and running more than people realise: tech help, book clubs, Lego clubs, local history groups. The single most underrated venue in this whole guide.

What your funding can and can't pay for

KEY POINT The NDIS pays for the *support*, not the *activity*. Your funding covers the help you need to take part; tickets, meals and memberships stay personal costs — the NDIS's own guidance is firm on it.

Scenario	Funding usually covers	You pay
Movies with a support worker	The support worker's time	Your ticket and popcorn (their ticket is often free with a Companion Card)
Weekly swim at the rec centre	Support worker's time; capacity building toward going solo	Your pool entry or membership
Group day trip run by a provider	The program's support component	Activity costs the provider itemises (entry fees, lunch)
Joining a community art class	Support to attend and participate	The class fee and materials

Scenario	Funding usually covers	You pay
Getting to any of the above	Transport support, where it's in your plan	Public transport fares

The Companion Card is the best deal in WA. If you need attendant support for life, the free WA Companion Card gets your support person free entry at participating venues — Optus Stadium, Perth Zoo, cinemas, festivals, public pools and Transperth among them. Every support worker should know whether the person they work with has one; every family should check eligibility if not.

Before you book — a 30-second checklist

- ☐ Which plan goal does this activity serve? (Say it in one sentence.)
- ☐ Is the support cost separate from the activity cost on the invoice?
- ☐ Would a group rate do the same job for less of the budget?
- ☐ Companion Card checked for the venue?
- ☐ Is there a free or cheaper version that builds the same skill?

Those five questions are also, almost word for word, what plan reviewers now ask. Under the October 2026 rules the goal link is tested first; a mix of group and one-to-one support stretches a tightened budget considerably; and blurred invoices are the fastest route to a difficult review conversation.

How a mentor turns a list into a life

> KEY POINT The difference between "we went to Hillarys again" and genuine participation is how deliberately the support is delivered — with, not for; one stretch per outing; shrinking on purpose.

At Good Company, our Perth mentors build each week around the participant's own goals, not a fixed program. In practice:

- **Planning with, not for.** The participant picks from options; the mentor shapes logistics. Choice is itself a skill that grows with use.
- **One stretch per outing.** Order your own coffee. Tap your own SmartRider. Ask the librarian the question. Small, repeated stretches are how independence compounds.
- **Shrinking on purpose.** From doing, to helping, to watching from the car, to not coming along at all. We count that as success, not lost hours.
- **Writing it down.** Notes that link each activity to a plan goal protect funding at review time and show families real progress, not just attendance.

A sample supported week

A realistic mix for someone building social confidence and work skills — group and one-to-one support blended to stretch the budget:

Day	Activity	Support	Goal it serves
Mon	Gym program at the local rec centre	1:1, fading	Health; independent routine

Day	Activity	Support	Goal it serves
Wed	Volunteer shift at the op shop	Independent (mentor checks in)	Work skills; references
Thu	Art group at DADAA	Group rate	Social connection; creative skill
Sat	Market stall prep or an anchor outing	1:1	Micro-enterprise; community access
Daily	One independent "stretch" task	None	Whatever's next

If you're in Perth and want support that works this way — mentoring, community participation, skill-building or our micro-enterprise program — get in touch with Good Company. We'll start with what you actually want your week to look like.

A Perth seasonal planner

KEY POINT Perth's climate does half your planning for you — flip summer days early or late, bank the outdoor months (March–May), and keep an indoor swap for every winter plan.

Season	Lean into	Worth knowing
Summer Dec–Feb	Early-morning beach trips, Scarborough's twilight markets, evening foreshore walks, air-conditioned museums and libraries in the heat of the day	Book beach wheelchairs ahead; UV is serious by 10am
Autumn Mar–May	Sculpture by the Sea at Cottesloe (March, with beach access days), Swan Valley trails, river picnics	The best outdoor months of the year — mild, calm, uncrowded
Winter Jun–Aug	Whale watching from Hillarys, gallery and museum circuits, indoor pools and rec centre programs, library clubs	Rain comes in bursts, not days — plan an indoor swap, not a cancellation
Spring Sep–Nov	Kings Park Festival wildflowers (September, free), Perth Royal Show, Araluen's tulips, Yanchep's wildflower boardwalk	Peak season — book early, go midweek where possible

Frequently asked questions

What activities can NDIS funding cover?
The *support* you need to take part — a support worker or mentor's time, group program support fees, and skill-building supports like mentoring or life-skills coaching. Not the activity's ordinary costs (tickets, meals, memberships); those stay personal expenses.

Can my support worker take me anywhere I choose?
Within reason, yes — that's the point of flexible Core funding. The activity should connect to a goal in your plan, be safe and be value for money. "Anywhere in Perth that serves a goal" is a fair summary.

What are good social activities for adults with disabilities in Perth?
Start with interest, not diagnosis: inclusive sport through Rebound WA or Inclusion WA, arts at DADAA, peer groups via ConnectGroups, library clubs, and council all-abilities programs. Section 3 lists the ones our mentors rate.

Is there funding specifically for group activities?
Group and centre-based supports are claimed at group rates, which cost your plan less per hour than one-to-one. For many people a weekly group plus some individual support is the sweet spot — especially under the tighter budgets phasing in from October 2026.

Do the October 2026 changes mean I'll lose my community access?
No — participation remains a funded category. Budgets are being reduced as plans renew, so expect more scrutiny of how activities link to goals. Respond in kind: clear goals, a group/individual mix, and low-cost venues stretch the same funding a long way.

Does a support worker get free entry to venues?
Often, yes — with a WA Companion Card, your companion enters free at participating venues including Optus Stadium, Perth Zoo, most cinemas and Transperth. It's free to apply.

How do I get more community participation funding in my plan?
Bring evidence to the planning meeting: what you want to do, which goal it serves, what support it takes, and what independence it will build. A provider or support coordinator can help word it. Specific beats general every time.

Sources and further reading

- Department of Health, Disability and Ageing — Securing the NDIS
- NDIS — supports funded by the NDIS
- WA Companion Card — eligibility and application
- Town of Cottesloe — beach wheelchair booking · City of South Perth — beach wheelchair · MSWA — WA beach access guide
- Sculpture by the Sea — Cottesloe beach access days

Organisation details were current at publication (November 2026) — verify session times and bookings on each organisation's site before promising them to a participant. This guide is general information, not individual NDIS advice.

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