

Assistive Technology
Submission 1

Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme
Parliamentary Inquiry NDIS Assistive Technology

Terms of Reference –

This submission is written in relation to the state of New South Wales.

- a) NDIS transition has greatly improved the speed in which assistive technology is supplied and provided in NSW under the NDIS model in the categories of Low Risk items. Low risk item gives choice and control to participants.

Under the NDIS reference for providing assistive technology, any other items not listed as Low Risk continues to plague participants with issues.

Once participants plans are approved, there should be no more approval stages slowing down the process for participants to have choice and control around assistive technology.

In NSW, Healthshare NSW (Enable) are consulted to see if they have a new or used item in stock to substitute to supply and not use the participants choice of contractor or supplier.

This method is in complete contradiction to the NDIS framework for participants choice and control.

Healthshare NSW (Enable) then add up to 15% of the cost and procure the equipment through the nominated or another supplier.

- b) It is taking up to 6 months from the time a participant's approval is granted to the time the participants approval is granted for assistive technology. It is unknown whether the estimated demand for equipment is accurate due to the timeframes continuing to frustrate the participants.

Where the participants NDIS plan is approved with allocated funds in each category accurately the system works great. Participants can access assistive technology almost immediately and delivery is overnight.

Where the participants NDIS plan is approved with no allocated funds in assistive technology the system is plagued with delays, lack of communication with participants and providers.

- c) Market based issues that impact the availability is the area of customised product. General lead times are 12-14 weeks for customised assistive technology. If the NDIS lead time is added that's almost 9months from when a participant has their plan approved to being supplied assistive technology.

- d) There are positive and negative in everyone's case. The NIDS planners should not have any influence in determination of an Occupational Therapist report. Many cases where equipment has been trialled recommended and been rejected due to a planner not deeming it reasonable and necessary.

Example -

\$1450 to install lights on a powered wheelchair.

Reasoning – Participant has a 13 year old daughter and wants to continue to join at after school activities.

NDIS planner rejected due to the AT report stating client suffers from fatigue, therefore participant would be too tired to attend afterschool activities.

Therefore, the request was declined limiting the participant to travel during daylight hours.

- e) The current role of the state (NSW) programs needs to be abolished. This is in direct contradiction with the NDIS Mission “People with disability have the same right as other Australians to determine their best interests and to have choice and control over their lives”.
In NSW the cost of assistive technology is +15% when purchased through state based programs.
- f) The current framework is not fit for purpose. Change is due to look at the entire approval process involving participants. This needs to take place from the commencement of an individual's approval.
1. Participants who wish to enrol for NDIS can be assessed initially to ensure they qualify.
 2. Award a nominated amount to start build support for planning meeting.
 3. Participant to choose support team.
 4. First meeting to take place and determine plan and supports, including assistive technology.
 5. Continue to support participants choice and control, finalise plan for submission. The plan should include AT reports, quotes for equipment, support services and coordination.
 6. Once approval is granted, participants to work with supports to engage providers. No more approvals to wait for.
- g) Other related matters –
Support coordinators should be immediately stripped of other registration categories such as providers of assistive technology.
In some cases, support coordinators are providing low risk assistive technology equipment to participants with extraordinary mark ups.
Support coordinators purchase equipment directly from mainstream stores to then on sell to participants as the manufacturers will not just sell to anyone.
Manufacturers ensure quality frameworks are upheld.