

3<sup>rd</sup> August 2006

The Secretary  
Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Submission to Senate Enquiry from ILCA  
RE: Fourth Commonwealth State/Territory Disability Agreement

Independent Living Centres Australia (ILCA) is a national body whose members provide information, advice, consultation and education to help people choose assistive technology (AT) and equipment solutions to achieve independence, meet their goals and make life easier. The group represents each state and the ACT.

For many people with a disability, assistive technology has the potential to improve independence and inclusion in the community and provide better quality and less expensive alternatives to other forms of health and social care. However, obtaining access to these solutions is a significant challenge. The criteria for funding eligibility vary from state to state which leads to confusion and inequity. Narrow definitions of AT in all states serve to restrict access to those most in need. There are multiple barriers to embracing AT in addition to the funding and policy obstacles. These include the volume of change facing organisations, lack of consumer pressure, organisational fragmentation and technology phobia present amongst many members of the disability sector.

The current CSTDA does not include assistive technology. In 1996, the evaluation conducted by Ernst and Young as part of the review of the CSDA, recommended the development of a National Equipment Strategy.

A national approach to access, support, and funding of AT is a vital step to inclusion and participation across Australia and an essential response to the rapid the rate of growth and change occurring in AT. It is important to the future of Australians with a disability, and those yet to have a disability, that AT be included in the next CSTDA.

AT is a vital component in the development of a national policy and service framework. The correct coordination, disbursement and application of AT is an economically sound strategy which can enrich the quality of life of people with a disability, meaning more people return to work, live safely in their own homes and actively participate in their community. In the current climate of workforce shortages AT has a significant role to play, reducing the volume of personal care services required by those with a disability and the frail aged and keeping people in the workforce.



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AT can have a positive impact on the lives of people with a disability, their carers and community members. A greater level of government support and commitment is required to ensure assistive technology is utilised and accessible to all Australians.

It is our hope that this Senate Enquiry into the Commonwealth State/Territory Disability Agreement takes on board the need for a national reform of assistive technology.

Yours sincerely,



Gerri Clay  
Chair  
Independent Living Centres Australia Inc  
Executive Director ILCWA



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