

## **A response to the “NDIA – Towards Solutions for Assistive Technology – Discussion Paper”**

***I am the mother of three children, two of which have multiple disability. I have more than five years experience with the NSW disability Assistive Technology (AT) provision through. For six years I was the President of the Association for Children with Disabilities NSW. I have also served on the Board of Children with Disability and am a member of a number of parent forums.***

***Heike Fabig***

I highly applaud the work that has gone into this discussion paper. It presents a clear overview of the key objectives, proposed approach and suggested approaches.

However, I have a fundamental problem with the approach of consolidated sourcing and procurement. In my experience, this is not the most effective approach, nor is it line with the key element of maximizing participant choice and control.

As the discussion paper notes, there is a definite need to ensure both price and quality of equipment are in the best interests of the consumer. While highly commendable in its intent, I believe the NDIA has chosen the wrong route to obtain these safeguard.

The fundamental problem with consolidated sourcing and procurement is that in the long run, it creates a static, stagnant and bureaucratic mode. It does not produce the paradigm shift the NDIS promised and advocates.

The current situation in NSW is such that there are very few suppliers of paediatric AT. This means we have little choice in the equipment on offer – indeed, I have many times only been shown “available” equipment by my child’s service provider, and when I informed them of other, more suitable technology for my child, found the service provider had either no knowledge of it or had decided not to offer it to us “because it would fall in the more complex/expensive category and that would be harder to get” under Enable NSW. Quite regularly, I have found better equipment overseas, which higher quality assurances, than what is available in NSW.

In addition, we have often had to wait weeks on end for ordered and paid equipment to arrive. There is no incentive for suppliers to deliver goods timely, as they know full well he have nowhere else to go.

Consolidated sourcing and procurement creates a captive market in which people have very little choice, very little control and no avenues to take their business elsewhere if they are dissatisfied with the suppliers of their AT.

In my experience, we as consumers of AT for our children, receive better quality and service in an open, transparent and competitive market – much like the “non-disabled” purchasing decisions we as a family make every day.

Therefore, while commendable in its intent, it would be more beneficial for NDIA and the NDIA AT consumers, to establish a process and procedure that ensures clients have access to a transparent and fully competitive market. Information provision - of prices, quality assurance and compliance schemes, and delivery times – would be paramount in such a system, and indeed be encouraged by the system itself. Access to existing consumer safeguards can be relatively easily enabled – the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) is there for all consumers to use. In addition, the NDIA can establish, or act as, a watchdog function which monitors the AT sector against client’s needs (in both price, quality and delivery time) against the KPIs suggested in your discussion paper.