



Opening from The Executive Officer

I could open with the common phrase; "We are coming out of a year like no other" and I would have to say no more... Despite all the difficulties that COVID-19 has brought, there have been some positives - we have even developed new skills in video conferencing and as an industry we have shown great resilience and growth over the past year.

Your membership value has also continued to grow as 2021 kicks off on a positive note with a big boost to the ATSA team with Melanie Robertson and Margret Noonan joining us to provide our membership with greater support.

Do not forget the opportunity for you to promote your business through the ATSA website, a number of members have already let us know of the extra referrals and sales that they have gained as a result of updating their ATSA Business Directory listing.

Enjoy the newsletter and look forward to being able to catch up at the 2021 ATSA Independent Living Expos.

Regards,
David Sinclair



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ATSA boosts resources and strengthens assistance to members

2021 has started with two new team members joining David, Kerry and Wendy.

Melanie Robertson joined the ATSA team in January - you may already know her from previous roles with *Interpoint Events* or, more recently, from time working with ATSA Members: *Specialised Wheelchair Company and Patient Handling*. Melanie will be working closely with the team at Interpoint Events to ensure the success and growth of the [ATSA Independent Living Expos](#), in addition to keeping our members regularly informed on industry matters – via newsletters, emails and on our website.

Margaret Noonan has joined ATSA as Senior Policy Officer and will work directly with David Sinclair.

Margaret's experience in policy development has been expanded over many years through her work in the not-for-profit sector including *Odyssey House*, *Ronald McDonald House Randwick*, *Vision Australia* and *Spinal Cord Injuries*. She also has experience in the commercial sector. Margaret will help ATSA generate submissions and enact change for the assistive technology industry.



2021 ATSA Independent Living Expos

With the changing COVID-19 landscape and continued zero days of community transmission in much of Australia, we are forging ahead with the *ATSA Independent Living Expos* in 2021. There will be plenty of hand-sanitising stations, touch-free entry, COVID marshals, additional cleaning staff and we will, of course, strictly comply with state requirements on the day.

The dates are: Melbourne 18-19 May and Perth 26-27 May 2021. COVID-19 restrictions permitting, we are hopeful of record numbers. Marketing and promotion is being ramped up however, as always, we appreciate your support in promoting to your networks. Need any help or ideas? Please contact our Event & Marketing Manager at: melanie.robertson@atsa.org.au

We have recently re-confirmed all the speakers and, inevitably, have a few gaps in both Melbourne and Perth programs. If you know of someone who should be included as a speaker, please email melanie.robertson@atsa.org.au.

For all exhibitors, don't forget to submit your new product for the "Best new AT product 2021" as judged by the Expo exhibitors - submissions close on 16 April 2021.

Canberra is back!

In addition to the events originally planned for 2020, we are preparing for the second Canberra event. This event will be held at Canberra Exhibition Park - offering free parking and easier accessibility. Lock in 27-28 October 2021 for a visit to our nation's capital. Contact amiller@intermedia.com.au to secure your stand.

ATSA Business Directory Listing

It is important you take a moment to check your business [directory listing](#).

This is a free service for our members and we are working with various organisations to promote your business to assist people looking for products that our industry supplies. We anticipate a significant increase in customer referrals to listed member businesses via the ATSA Business Directory in the coming months.

If you are having trouble updating your listing please email info@atsa.org.au for assistance.

New eNewsletter for NDIS participants - SafeGuard

The NDIS Commission has begun publishing a newsletter for NDIS participants. Please share this new resource with NDIS participants you know and support. The first edition contains information on how people can [directly subscribe to the quarterly newsletter](#).

COVID-19 vaccination roll-out

The Australian Government Department of Health and the Department of Social Services are leading the vaccination planning for people with disability with the NDIS Commission and NDIA support. [Click here](#) for the latest information.

Beware of the Living Expo Scammers

Unfortunately, it has become the norm that scammers purporting to be formally part of the Expos attempt to sell lists of attendees. Please **do not fall** into that trap! ATSA does not sell or circulate attendee lists or contact details under any circumstances and neither does our event manager, Interpoint Events.

Also, exhibitors should beware of "preferred stand builders for the expos" and "Fair Directories providers" as these are most likely to be scammers. If you have questions about the validity of communications, contact Melanie Robertson melanie.robertson@atsa.org.au.

Grant opportunity

Exhibitors for the ATSA Independent Living Expo, Melbourne, Perth and Canberra have received a boost with the shows being confirmed as approved events under the Australian Government's Business Events Grants program.

Eligible exhibitors can apply and may be directly reimbursed for up to 50% of the costs (minimum spend is \$20,000 per event) to attend or exhibit at this pre-approved event. Grants may cover event costs including travel; accommodation; marketing and promotional materials; exhibition registration; stand development; equipment hire, and networking functions.

Eligible applicants should apply now! Applications close at 5pm on 30 March 2021 AEST, or when all funding has been allocated. Visit [Business Events Grant Opportunity](#) | [business.gov.au](#) to start your application.

We are looking forward to seeing you at the ATSA Independent Living Expos in 2021.

www.atsaindependentlivingexpo.com.au

Business education webinars

ATSA has listened to the requests for additional business education for our members. We are excited to have partnered with the *Australian Dental Industry Association* (ADIA) and have access to their Refresh webinar program - at no charge for ATSA members and their staff.

The first session was held in early February and we received some very positive feedback on the session conducted by Justin Leigh, covering *The art of remote Selling & Influencing*.

If you missed the session - [Click here to watch the recording](#).

Password: REfrESHWebinarFEB

"I want to say a big thank you for getting us access to the Business webinar that was conducted this morning. Despite a very early start, the content and presentation was sensational."

I found it completely relevant to our industry and the style and delivery captured my attention throughout the presentation. I really look forward to getting access to the recorded presentation to show to the rest of my sales team.

Looking forward to the next presentation!"

Stephen Quayle,
National Sales & Marketing, FOR-DE Group Pty Ltd

"Just wanted to say a quick thank you for the opportunity to complete the online sales training program "Refresh Webinar Series" with Justin Leigh.

The session was relevant and interactive and each of our team were able to get something from the session. Many reminders to things that we do without noticing.

A credit to you and the team at ATSA and we would look forward to any future opportunity to develop our team."

Justin Stivala,
Retail Operations & Purchasing Manager,
Country Care Group

Did you miss the March Refresh Webinar? Anneli Blundell provided a fresh perspective on communication and the language of success by exploring the key credibility killers in any communication context. She helped attendees discover if they are unknowingly sending the wrong signals about their capability and more importantly what to do about it! This 30 minute session is a teaser of what Anneli will be presenting at the Refresh Conference in November

[Click here](#) to see a replay.

Password: RWSmarch2021

Please note this presentation is only available until the end of March 2021.

Details for April Refresh Webinar will be emailed as soon as they are available.

Papers submitted

During the Christmas period, ATSA was hard at work to ensure the concerns and opinions of our members were being heard by Government:

- Right to Repair - Productivity Commission Issues Paper;
- Queensland Productivity Commission Inquiry into the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) market in Queensland, and
- ATSA's Submissions to the Counsel Assisting the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety.

Key Outcomes from Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety

It is clear from the Recommendations and Executive Summary from the Royal Commission into Aged Care that Assistive Technology has a high profile within the proposed reforms.

One of the key Recommendations from the Commission is that from "1 July 2022, the Australian Government should implement an assistive technology and home modifications category within the aged care program."

In December 2020, ATSA put forward a submission to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety to address the issue of restrictive practices that would, otherwise, have removed choice and control for a participant requiring access to AT. In our submission, we recommended participants “be able to apply “choice and control” and have the opportunity to purchase their AT and Home modifications from approved providers other than their home care provider, then claim against their approved package under the terms and values as set out in the new Act.

We are delighted to advise that our voice has been heard and that in the Executive Summary from the Commission, their recommendation is as follows:

“We recommend that the System Governor should develop and implement a new planning regime that replaces the current planning arrangements with planning undertaken both nationally and at the local level. The System Governor should ensure the new position of System Governor should ensure:

- an adequately diverse mix and adequate number of providers to enable older people seeking services to exercise an informed choice, where possible, between available providers...”

We will continue to review the Recommendations from the Royal Commission and monitor the Government’s response on behalf of our Members.

Research projects

ATSA is currently working with iMove and La Trobe University, on Australia’s Public Transport Disability Standards and Automated Vehicles with DITRDC (Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications) and the University of Wollongong on Motorised Mobility Device research.

More details can be found on both projects here [Research Projects | Assistive Technology Suppliers Australia \(ATSA\) Ltd](#) Many thanks to our members who have already promoted the MMD survey – including most recently *Aidacare* in Ballina and *Country Care* in Coffs Harbour.

If you would like to help circulate the online survey to your clients, please email melanie.robertson@atsa.org.au.

ATSA is also assisting ARATA who are currently collaborating with both the WHO Assistive Technology team and Monash University, together with the *Centre for Inclusive Policy* undertaking research to explore how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected access to AT services. The findings will provide valuable insights that will inform future WHO work to support AT services. We are pleased that some research has already been published on this topic and hope to build on that research by hearing from AT service providers and AT service users who may be beyond our global and digitally connected networks.

If you have questions about this research, please feel free to contact Natasha Layton natasha.layton@monash.edu.

Changes to the NDIA prescribing templates

Reminder: Health care professionals must meet the following NDIA requirements if recommending your AT device to an NDIA participant:

- [Assessment Template – General Assistive Technology, page 12](#)
- 3.7.4 Does this AT comply with relevant AT Australian Standards (or ISO AT standards)?
- If yes, which standards?
- If no, why not and does this add to the risk?

As the supplier of AT devices, it will be in your best interests to have this information on hand.

If you are not the importer or manufacturer of the prescribed device, you will need to ask your supplier for this information.

COVID normal – support measures

The NDIA has reviewed all temporary COVID-19 measures to determine what is needed to safely deliver NDIS supports and services as restrictions around Australia ease.

Low-cost assistive technology (AT) will remain in place

- Participant access to low-cost AT will continue to be monitored as participants as providers adapt to COVID normal.
- All low-cost AT purchases should be made in consultation with a participant’s existing provider.

The [NDIS Price Guide and Support Catalogue](#) and information on the [SIL](#) and [Low-cost AT](#) pages of the NDIS website were updated on 1 March 2021.

NDIS market continues to grow

Details of how the NDIS performed between 1 October and 31 December 2020 are now available in their latest Quarterly Report.

Around \$5.5 billion in total was spent on participant supports this quarter. The average payment to participants has increased over the past 3 years from \$35,400 in 2017 to \$52,300 in 2020. The average plan budget has increased by 22% over the same time to \$71,200.

Features of the latest report:

- Australia now has 432,649 NDIS participants.
- More than 21,000 people joined the NDIS this quarter, 35% of whom were aged 0 to 6.

- More participants with psychosocial disability are joining the NDIS – 14.1% of new participants this quarter, compared to 9.8% in previous quarters combined.
- COVID-19 infection rates among NDIS participants are 2.5 times lower than the general population.
- 80% of adults aged 25 and above think the NDIS helped them have more choices and more control over their life.
- 70% of parents of school children aged up to 14 think the NDIS helped their child to become more independent.

More information on providers and the growing market is available in part 4 of the report, including:

- regions where plan utilisation is below the national average
- regions where a small number of providers are receiving a large amount of the payments – indicating less competition
- trial projects to address market gaps.

The NDIA is committed to improving systems so that they are simpler, faster, fairer and more flexible. An NDIS 2020 year in review summary is also on the NDIS website.

[Read the Quarterly Report and 2020 in review.](#)

Request for tender now open: expanded funding for Goods, Equipment and Assistive Technology for older Australians

The Australian Government is committing funding of up to \$10 million in 2020-21 and \$10 million in 2021-22 to provide high quality, value for money and equitable access to Goods, Equipment and Assistive Technology (GEAT) for older Australians.

The department is supporting this commitment through an open request for tender (RFT) that establishes a panel of one or more providers/agents. Panel members will have national capability and capacity to source, supply, install, and maintain GEAT to older Australians through the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP).

This tender will enable the department to trial an alternative funding approach to current GEAT grant arrangements. It will source providers or agents to administer and provide GEAT across Australia, ensuring equitable access to meet the changing needs of CHSP clients.

Current GEAT providers who wish to tender should note that, if successful, their existing GEAT grant funding will be retained. The funds for this tender are separate to the CHSP grant agreement.

Tenders must be lodged by **2:00pm (AEDT) Tuesday, 16 March 2021.**

For more information about this RFT, visit the [Austender](#) website.

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