




## Assistive Technology Provider Update

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ndis

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## Acknowledgement of Country



We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians, the Wurundjeri people, of the Country on which we meet today, and their continuing connection to land, sea, and community. We pay our respects to their Elders, past present and emerging.

We would like to extend that acknowledgement and respect to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples here today.

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## Agenda



- **Our Current Environment**
- **Future Focus**
- **AT Market Sourcing**
- **Insights from review of AT claiming data**
- **Working together – NDIA input**
- **Working together – provider input**
- **Questions**

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## NDIA Current Environment



### Recent Changes

#### **NDIA Board**

- New Chair Kurt Fearnley
- Five people with disability (or lived experience) on the NDIA Board.

#### **CEO and Senior Leadership Team**

- New CEO Rebecca Falkingham, and some new faces to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT)
- Focus on improving outcomes for participants and ensuring the sustainability of the Scheme for future generations
- The Government is investing more than \$720 million in the NDIA's capability, capacity and systems, developed with the NDIA Board, and in consultation with the NDIS Review Co-chairs.
- The final reports of the NDIS Review and the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability will also inform where and how further improvements need to be made.

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## Future Focus



### Future of the NDIS (18 April 2023)

Six key policy directions (systemic reforms)

- ✓ 1. NDIA Workforce
- ✓ 2. Long-term Planning
- ✓ 3. Addressing spiralling expenses
- ✓ 4. Better outcomes from Supported Independent Living
- ✓ 5. Eliminate unethical practices
- ✓ 6. Increasing community and mainstream supports

<https://ministers.dss.gov.au/speeches/10911>

### Budget 2023-24 (9 May 2023)

At a high level, the Budget contained total funding of \$42.13 billion to the NDIS. Spending includes:

- \$429.5 million investment in the NDIA's workforce capability
- \$63.8 million to take a lifetime approach to ensure plans are more transparent and flexible for life events
- \$29.3 million to support the quality and effectiveness of services provided to participants

<https://ministers.dss.gov.au/media-releases/11166>

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## Assistive Technology Market Sourcing



### Our Vision

- Supporting dynamic and innovative markets that deliver superior participant outcomes and improved Scheme sustainability through leveraging the buying power of the NDIS.
- Increased stakeholder satisfaction through improved processes and reduced administrative burden and delays.
- We use data to inform the work we do, the decisions we make, and how we manage risk.

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## Continence Provider List



- The NDIS Continence Provider List was launched November 2021 in response to barriers encountered by participants in accessing continence supports.
- The List was established through an EOI and was not considered a procurement.
- This is the first time the NDIA has taken this “light touch stewardship” approach and provides a unique insight into a segment of the AT market, that may inform future design.



**Over 150,000** participants are funded for continence supports



**11 List Providers**  
**>2,900** Continence Providers in the Australian market



Continence Expenditure:  
**Over half of participant continence spending** now goes to List Providers

### Key Benefits of the Continence Provider List

#### Participants



- Trusted providers allow for informed decision making
- Market transparency for price comparison

#### Providers



- Accessible services
- List provides credibility and contributes to business growth

#### NDIA



- Enhanced relationship with NDIA
- Significant market insights

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## Continence Provider List (cont'd)



We are currently undertaking a comprehensive evaluation of the Continence Provider List, which will help inform the future approach to AT Market Sourcing

### What are we hearing from providers

- Supportive of the initiative
- Committed to working with NDIA to improve the provision of supports
- The approach taken to establish a List (rather than a Panel) is different and positive for the industry and the market
- Listing on the NDIS website provides an additional level of credibility
- Provided an opportunity to build stronger relationships with NDIA

### What are we hearing from participants

- Found the List effective to find a new provider of continence products
- Greater range of products available
- Realising benefits in areas other than pricing, such as samples, education / support and website accessibility for ease of online ordering
- Finding a provider that is geographically closer to home, resulting in faster and more cost-efficient deliveries

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## Insights from a sample of NDIA planning decisions



Recent sample of a number of NDIA plans **with requests for Mid Cost AT**.

A key part was reviewing the evidence provided by participants/AT Advisors against **Our Guideline – Assistive Technology**:

**Less than half of requests provided all the evidence specified in Our Guideline:**

- **Over 1/5** did not indicate why the AT was the best value support for the participant's disability
- some gave no indication/estimate of the cost of the support
- too many met only one, or no criterion.

Overall response to each criterion was:

- Specified the AT required - **95%**
- Explained how AT was the best value – **50%**
- Explained how the AT will support participant – **84%**
- Provided estimate of likely cost of AT – **73%**

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## Complete AT requests help speed NDIA planning



NDIA Plan Decision makers are required to make decisions based on the evidence they have available:

**Our Guideline – Assistive Technology** describes what is required for Mid Cost AT:

1. the AT the participant needs
2. why the AT is the best value, over other supports, to help with the participant's disability support needs
3. how the AT will help with the participant's disability support needs and help them pursue the goals in plan
4. an estimate of how much the AT is likely to cost.

**Evidence must be consistent, and consider what the participant already has available.**

For example these requests needed further explanation:

- the request (e.g. 5 pairs of AFO in a year), didn't match the evidence provided (suggesting 3/yr)
- replacement of an older manual wheelchair, with no comment about the overlap with a new powerchair that had recently been funded.

The NDIA will continue work to improve our communication to participants to support plan implementation.

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## Insights from review of AT claiming data



NDIA reviews AT claiming data regularly to guide review of AT benchmark pricing.

- A significant number of providers continue to use old codes (withdrawn in March 2022)
- Many appear to use a single code for all claims of a type of support (e.g. mattress) and don't select the *most appropriate* code from the AT, HM & Consumable Code guide based on complexity
- Some claims do not reflect the actual amount paid for single item of AT
- Abuse of the 'AT Supplementary Charge' codes has appeared

**This undermines NDIA data and compliance monitoring:**

- may cause NDIA to delay payment, or commence fraud or sharp practice investigations
- calculations of real market prices are difficult or impossible, preventing appropriate setting of benchmarks
- Some provider claims breach the Pricing Arrangements and Claiming Rules published in the Assistive Technology, Home Modifications and Consumables Code Guide (ATHM Code Guide), such as pre-payment rules

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## Working together – provider input



**Please read the AT, HM & Consumables Code Guide to make sure that:**

- you use current codes to claim (unless the plan has a 'stated' code).
- you are claiming pre-payment or subscriptions compliant with the Pricing Arrangements
- that your service agreements and contracts do not have unfair clauses (e.g. requiring participants to pay for unplanned price increases even after contract is signed.)
- **the total** cost of an AT support (e.g. a manual wheelchair) is claimed once against the right code – not multiple claims for each subitem (and 1 wheelchair is 1 claim!)
- delivery, rental, repair, maintenance or setup fees are claimed separately and correctly

If you have a question about which line item to use or how you should claim please contact Provider Support to ask – don't guess.

If you find any line item descriptions that are confusing or line items that are missing, please advise us at [assistive.tech@ndis.gov.au](mailto:assistive.tech@ndis.gov.au)

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## Working together – NDIA support



The NDIA plans to provide further support to help the sector with compliance:

### Phase 1

- Provide more information for AT Providers on how to claim correctly
- Turn off codes that were decommissioned in the past and are no longer needed
- Support feedback on existing codes and their descriptions to improve accurate use (and create new codes if needed).
- Explore ways to authorise legitimate cost variation for some AT claims, especially where there has been unavoidable delay in supply

### Phase 2

- Investigate non-compliant claiming, and inappropriate contracts and service agreements
  - Provide targeted education & correction opportunities
  - Proceed with compliance action

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## Good outcomes and value for money matter



*AT is an investment – and there should be clear outcomes expected from its supply and use.*

- The Government initiatives are focused on delivering success for participants:
  - Better outcomes for their social and economic participation
  - Market stewardship and approaches that deliver best value for money
- Design and delivery of the improvements will continue to involve significant co-design.
- Success though depends on consistent approaches and compliance:
  - Clear guidance and rules (NDIS Code of Conduct, NDIA Our Guidelines, AT, HM & Consumable Code Guide)
  - Accurate and complete evidence to enable NDIA decisions
  - Helpful information in Participant Plans and/or from NDIA staff/partners
  - Compliant and accurate business behaviour and financial practices
  - Ongoing monitoring and engagement to encourage continuous improvement

Current 23 November 2022

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# Questions

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## National Disability Insurance Agency

-  1800 800 110
-  [ndis.gov.au](https://www.ndis.gov.au)
-  [enquiries@ndis.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@ndis.gov.au) (for participant or claiming questions)
-  [Assistive.tech@ndis.gov.au](mailto:Assistive.tech@ndis.gov.au) (for AT policy or sourcing issues)
-  Find us on Facebook/NDISAus
-  Follow us on Twitter @NDIS

## For people with hearing or speech loss

-  TTY: 1800 555 677
-  Speak and Listen: 1800 555 727

## For people who need help with English

-  TIS: 131 450

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