

Aged Care Reform - Support at Home service Position Statement - October 2023

ATSA believes:

- the existing model of supply of Assistive Technology (AT) in the current Home Care Package program should be applied to the Support at Home program.
- the model of supply for AT in Aged Care Reform should incorporate a person-centered approach where older Australians have choice and control and be provided the appropriate AT needed to live independent lives.
- the review of the Aged Care Act should include reference to AT within the definitions, Statement of Principles and Statement of Rights in the revised Act.

Data from the Department of Health and Aged Care shows a positive return on investment in AT based on the existing model of supply while the cost-benefit analysis for the introduction of a loan pool has not been explained.

Until this can be demonstrated,

ATSA calls for:

1. A transparent cost benefit and impact analysis to be undertaken on the proposed government operated loan pool model.

Noting:

- a. in the Department of Health's Review of Assistive Technology Programs in Australia 9 June 2020¹ the return on investment across Assistive Technology (AT) program options ranged from "\$5.15 (Option 8) to \$33.83 (Option 3) for every \$1 spent on AT" (Table 1-1). This was based on the current model of AT supply.
- b. based on a recent industry survey conducted with ATSA's members, if the proposed model has suppliers restricted to only the provision of consumables or low-cost AT and wrap around services:
 - AT suppliers would expect an average of a 42% loss of staff
 - 22% would close their doors
 - regional AT suppliers would be worse hit, with unprofitable regions no longer serviced
- c. Should the above losses occur, there is a risk of significant flow on effects to other funding schemes such as the NDIS and Veterans Affairs in terms of shortages of AT product supply and support services, particularly in regional areas.

2. Transparency in the model of supply

In particular:

- a. the inclusion of suppliers who are the AT subject matter experts in the detailed design of the AT supply for the Support at Home model.
- b. clarification on how the loan pool will meet the criteria provided in the Terms of Reference³ provided to the Commissioners for the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety with regard to “choice and control” for older Australians.

3. Other concerns about the model of supply

- a. as First Nations people make up 18.2% of people living in remote areas and 47.2% of people living in very remote areas in Australia² the question arises as to how older Australians in these areas will be supported by a central government loan pool for the AT they need? What choice will they have in the AT they receive? Noting the risk of regional AT supply businesses either downsizing or closing should a government loan pool be enacted, the question of what wrap around services will be available must also be addressed.
- b. any direct government involvement in service provision and supply to customers must operate within established competitive neutrality principles for government owned business enterprises.

Background

The Reforms to Aged care were initiated out of the recommendations made by Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety⁴. They include changes to the Aged Care Act, workforce, residential and in-home services.

A trial of a state-based loan pool through Enable NSW is planned for early 2024 and will run for a period of 2 years. Those suppliers who currently provide AT to Enable NSW under current contract arrangements would be expected to continue to do so during the trial period.

References

¹ [Review of Assistive Technology Programs in Australia Final Report | Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care](#)

² [The Territory Gap: comparing Australia's remote Indigenous communities - The Centre for Independent Studies \(cis.org.au\)](#)

³ [Terms of Reference | Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety](#)

⁴ [Final Report | Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety.](#)