



## Assistive Technology Provider Update

Lloyd Walker

**Assistive Technology**

**Market Innovation Branch**

**ndis**

ATSA Expo Presentation 06 March 2024

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**ndis**

## Acknowledgement of Country



We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians, the Ngunnawal 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
- Market Innovation Teams responsible for AT
- Transition to the new NDIA computer system (PACE)
- Concerns about AT approvals since late 2023
- Confirmation of correct NDIS guidance/practice
- Accuracy in evidence and claiming benefits all
- Questions

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## NDIA Current Environment



### Transformation for Outcomes

#### Focus

- Co-designing with participants & wider disability community on 6 operational reform program initiatives for the NDIS (see [www.ndis.gov.au/community/have-your-say/reform-outcomes](http://www.ndis.gov.au/community/have-your-say/reform-outcomes) )
  - This work is ongoing, progressing a range of topics with broad stakeholder groups
- Focus on improving outcomes for participants and ensuring the sustainability of the Scheme for future generations
- The Government is yet to finalise its response to recommendations from the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, and the final report of the NDIS Review. However, some commitments have already been made and begun in response:
  - Funding for innovative efforts to support babies with early signs of autism to thrive
  - Crack Down on Fraud program, including investment in improved claim & payment systems
  - Funding for the NDIS Provider and Worker Registration Taskforce
- Dept of Social Services (DSS) is finalising grant documents for a national AT rental, subscription and refurbishment program – the Ability First Australia AT Pilot Project

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## Reform for Outcomes Program



- In April 2023, the Australian government announced an investment of \$724.4 million to reform the NDIS to improve outcomes for participants.
- To uplift capability, capacity and systems to better support participants, the NDIA is investing in an initiative to improve participant access to evidence-based supports that meet their individual needs.
- This includes the Preferred Provider Approach, which aims to;
  - Help participants make informed decisions when choosing providers.
  - Provide participants with more information and options when choosing providers, including better information on the NDIS website and in other community forums.
  - Improve access to information about what supports and services help participants reach their goals and achieve better outcomes, based on evidence and best practice.
- An example of an initiative to support outcomes for participants is the **NDIS Continence Provider List**. This is a list of providers to help participants find trusted information on continence products and providers more easily and was extended for a final year in October 2023.

see <https://www.ndis.gov.au/community/have-your-say/reform-outcomes> and <https://www.ndis.gov.au/participants/assistive-technology-explained/continence-provider-list>

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## AT Markets Innovation team



### Our Focus

- Work with participants (co-design), the sector and other agencies to improve participant access to quality and cost-effective AT advice and information.
- Increased stakeholder satisfaction through improved processes and reduced administrative burden for successful AT implementation.
- Pursue evidence-based approaches, linked with effective product stewardship to optimise the return on the NDIS investment in participant AT.

We work with the Dept of Social Services in their co-design work on the Expert Advisory Panel for Evidence-based Assistive Technology And Supports

[engage.dss.gov.au/promoting-evidence-based-assistive-technology-and-supports/](https://engage.dss.gov.au/promoting-evidence-based-assistive-technology-and-supports/)

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## Transition to the new NDIA computer system (PACE)



- We started the gradual, national rollout on 30 October 2023, and are taking a careful approach.
- If a participant has a current plan in SAP/CRM and it is meeting their needs, they can agree to have that plan extended for now.

### All new planning (and changes to plans) is now being done in the PACE system.

- When existing NDIS plans need change, they will transition into PACE.
- Once a PACE Plan is built, any further requests for needed AT generally do not require a complete plan reassessment – mostly just Plan Variation.
- PACE plans have a dedicated support category (budget) for AT Repairs, Maintenance and Rental
  - This allocates appropriate funding at regular intervals, reducing the risk it will run out in longer plans
  - Providers will use the same Repair, Maintenance & Rental codes listed in the AT, HM & Consumables code guide.

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## Transition to the new NDIA PACE system (Providers)



- **All provider claims, and payment queries** continue to be made in the myplace provider portal. This will continue as participants transition into PACE.
- The codes listed in the current AT, HM & Consumables Code Guide should be used to claim.

### *For all PACE plans:*

- there are no service bookings, so Service Agreements with your participants are even more important
- Single-claims function will not work for PACE plans. You should use bulk payment requests to claim.
- Fraud and claim compliance monitoring applies to all claims
- If a participant's funds are Agency Managed, participants are able to check a claim before it is paid

Pricing arrangements and limits are same for participants in both PACE and the old system.

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## PACE Plan Claims – participant checks (Agency managed)



If a participant's funds are Agency Managed, and you haven't previously been their provider:

- you should ask the participant to add you to their 'my providers' list (they can do this at any time on their portal or by contacting the National Contact Centre).

Claims from 'my providers' are generally paid within 2 to 3 days.

All other AT Agency Managed claims will trigger an SMS to the participant or their nominee to approve the payment:

- Participants can check a claim and approve or dispute it on their portal (they can also call the NCC)
- If a participant does not agree with the claim, a Claims Review Officer will be assigned to review the claim. They may contact the provider and the participant if further information is required
- If the participant takes no action, it may take up to 10 days for payment to be automatically approved.

Pricing arrangements and limits are same for participants in both PACE and the old system. -

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## The NDIS subsite & learning environment



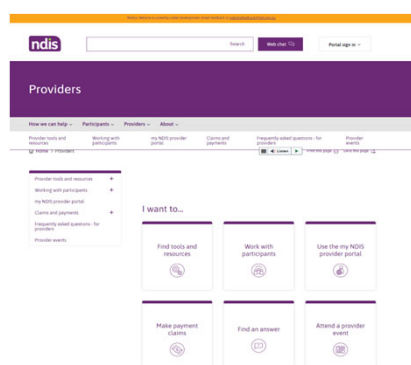
[improvements.ndis.gov.au](https://improvements.ndis.gov.au)

- Dedicated source of current information for participants, providers, and the disability community
- Has link to education sessions/events
- You can provide feedback through the website

Online provider learning environment to experience the new my NDIS provider portal

Includes scenario walk throughs

<https://provider-portal-training.ndis.gov.au/>



### Welcome to the Provider learning environment

#### Who is this for?

We have built an online learning environment for providers to learn how to use the new my NDIS provider portal.

This learning environment has walk-through tutorials that are easy to follow and use a step-by-step approach. The tutorials are tailored for each type of provider.

#### Please note:

- This is a prototype, not the real thing. So nothing will break.
- Be aware that the provider learning environment is not compatible with all screen readers.



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## AT approvals since late 2023



- We are aware that some participants are experiencing delays in NDIA decisions for requested supports (including assistive technology)
- The NDIA continues to examine its processes to reduce these delays
- An Action plan has been implemented to:
  - Ensure highest priority requests are considered with urgency
  - Reduce overall wait times
- Almost 50,000 requests for plan reassessment were processed in December, and 27% of over 250,000 emails were responded to within 2 business days.

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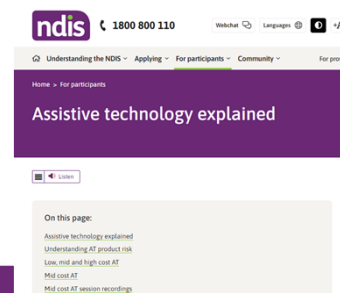
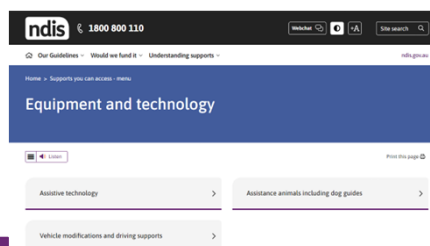
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## AT Guidelines and Evidence needed is unchanged



- The NDIA has not changed requirements or processes for participants requesting or using funding within their plan for AT since March 2022.
- All AT documentation is unchanged (apart from a Dog Guide Assessment Template currently under trial)
- Current requirements are explained in Our Guidelines [ourguidelines.ndis.gov.au](https://ourguidelines.ndis.gov.au)
- Current information is at [www.ndis.gov.au/AT](https://www.ndis.gov.au/AT), and assessment templates under the Provider section of the NDIS website.



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## Correcting the record...

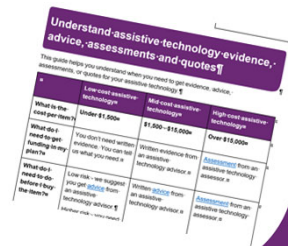


- In late 2023 up until February 2024, some incorrect instructions have been sent to participants and providers by our teams. The scripts have now been corrected, and staff reminded of the correct processes.

Remember – Our Guidelines and Requirements for AT have not changed since 2022.

### 1. Requests for Mid Cost AT:

- A participant needs to have sufficient funding in their plan for the AT they require. To buy Mid Cost AT, this is in the Assistive Technology Capital Support Category.
- If the participant **doesn't have enough funding** in that budget for the AT required,
  - submit the evidence to the NDIA as per Our Guidelines
  - If AT is accepted as reasonable and necessary, funding will be added to the plan.
- When there **is sufficient funding** in a plan:
  - no further approval from the NDIA is needed.
  - participants must still work with their AT advisor to buy or get the AT right for them.
- Quotes are not required for AT valued less than \$15,000; but can be a cost estimate



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## Correcting the record.... (Extra forms for AT requests)



- Change of Circumstance (or Change of Situation) forms are generally **not required** if solely requesting AT using correct evidence.

Add to the AT email request (with the attached evidence) to tell us clearly if the request is :

- for replacement AT that has now failed. (Tell us if participation is now limited as a result)
- evidence for AT, that a planner asked for, or was discussed at a planning meeting
- to show that the participant couldn't source the suitable AT with the plan funding provided

**But remember**, NDIA staff need more detailed evidence for higher cost AT (as per Our Guidelines).

AT trials, or evidence that alternate (usually lower cost) options were considered, is particularly important if this is new AT for the participant.

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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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## Working together – provider focus



**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!)
  - *In PACE, you should correctly use "Supplementary AT Charge" codes to claim for extra amounts above the benchmark values (set around the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile for such products) for higher cost (quotable) codes – which you should claim first.*
- delivery, rental, repair, maintenance or setup fees are claimed separately and correctly (e.g. nominal \$1 claiming)

If you have a question about which line item to use or how you should claim, please contact Provider Support to ask.

**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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# 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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