



# The provision of Assistive Technology under the NDIS: An update from ATSA

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# Session overview

1. The role of ATSA
2. The work ATSA has been undertaking to advocate for improved access to AT under the NDIS
3. Upcoming changes to watch for in the NDIS space
4. What ATSA has been doing to advocate for improved access to AT for people with disability who are not eligible for the NDIS



# About us



## Our Vision

By 2030 all Australians will have equal access to the assistive technology necessary for their full participation in society, empowering them to lead lives of their choosing



# About us



- **Established in 2000** (25 years this year!)
- **National peak body**
  - AT industry – including suppliers, distributors, manufacturers, and technicians
  - Allied health professionals - Affiliate membership
- **Charitable status in 2019** – our mandate ensures we advance the health and social wellbeing of assistive technology users

# About us



## Our Purpose

To support the assistive technology industry to enhance the lives of Australians with disability through:

- Ensuring the provision of quality equipment
- Upholding ethical business practices
- Conducting research
- Promoting education
- Cultivating partnerships
- Advocating for positive change with government and other stakeholders

# About us



## Policy and Advocacy at ATSA

We typically undertake policy and advocacy work relating to:

- The National Disability Insurance Scheme
- Australia's aged care system
- Standards Australia
- The Therapeutic Goods Administration





## NDIS approval delays

- The NDIS Participant Service Guarantee - maximum timeframes for the approval of AT
  - low and mid-cost items within **28 days**
  - high-cost or complex items within **50 days**
- These timeframes continue to be ignored, with some participants waiting upwards of 12 months for the approval of critical AT
- Suppliers continue to experience financial hardship and threats to their long-term sustainability as a result of these delays - flow-on effect for NDIS participants



## ATSA member feedback on NDIS delays

**Outstanding quotes >6 months**

**749**

**Total value**

**\$25,700,000**

- Between late December and the end of January, we received data from 7 members
- Delayed quotes mostly related to higher end mid-cost items (>\$10k) and high-cost items (>\$15k)



## How have we tackled this issue?

- Meeting with Bill Shorten in late November 2024
- The Minister made a commitment to:
  - Ensuring the NDIA resumes timely reviews of AT requests in line with the NDIS Participant Service Guarantee by early 2025.
  - Regular discussions with staff at the NDIA and Department of Social Services on progress.





## What have we learned from the NDIA since then?

- 380 National Contact Centre staff have been trained to handle delegate processes, including AT replacement requests - able to make minor plan adjustments (including AT-related decisions).
- First plans for participants aged 9+ are now within the Participant Service Guarantee timeframes.
- Plan changes are still not being dealt with within the timeframes outlined in the Participant Service Guarantee, but the agency expects to see an improvement by July 2025.
- Urgent AT-related change requests are being identified and triaged. Priority-tagged cases should reach a planner within one week.



## What can you do?

1. The National Contact Centre (NCC) should be your first contact point:  
[providersupport@ndis.gov.au](mailto:providersupport@ndis.gov.au)
2. Include the words “**AT Request**” in the subject line
3. Make sure you obtain a **case number or receipt number** from the NCC representative who responds to your email. Use this number in any follow-up correspondence with the agency
4. Suppliers should include any relevant **information about loss of revenue or financial hardship** that may highlight the severity of the delay
5. For systemic issues, write directly to the agency’s AT team at:  
[ASSISTIVE.TECH@ndis.gov.au](mailto:ASSISTIVE.TECH@ndis.gov.au)

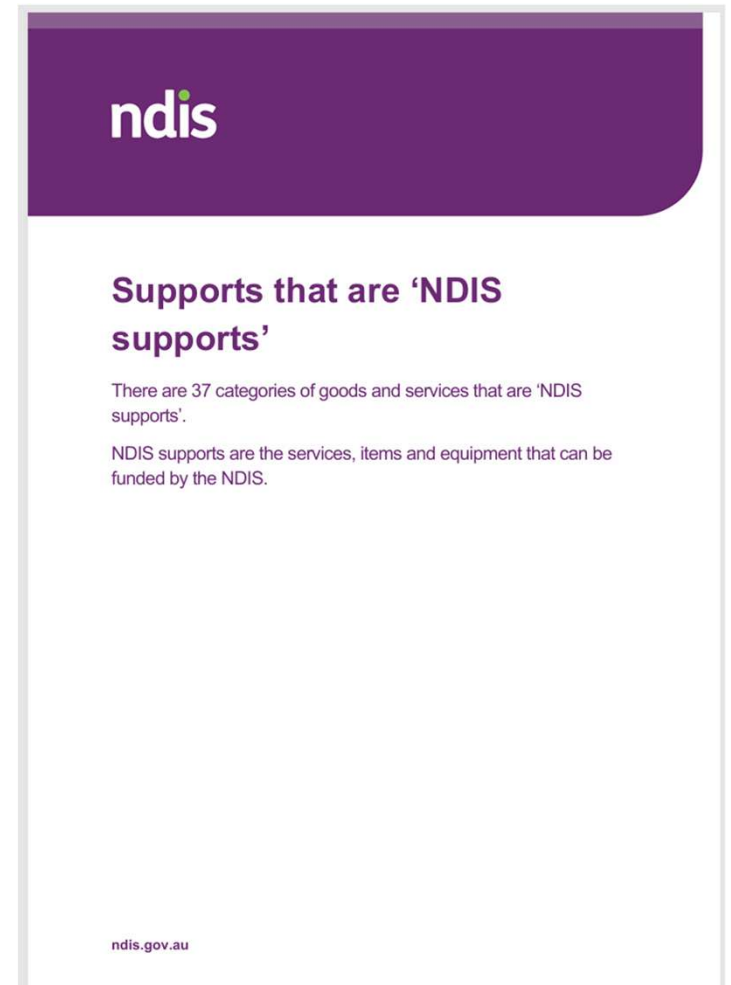


## Funding tiers for AT

- In 2019, the NDIA introduced a new policy for mid-cost AT
- This was intended to improve the efficiency of approvals of AT costing between \$1,500 and \$15,000.
- This policy has **not** been reviewed since its inception. With rising costs associated with the manufacture and provision of AT, it is no longer fit for purpose and continues to unnecessarily force many requests into the lengthier high-cost approval process.
- During our meeting with the NDIA, they requested that stakeholders send through **specific examples of items that had shifted from mid-cost to high-cost due to market changes.**

## NDIS support lists

- AT stakeholders have reported a range of issues with approvals since the new support lists were introduced in October
- These support lists are not permanent
- The Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments are yet to agree on final support lists, which will come into affect in the second half of the year
- We need to collect as much feedback as possible about the shortfalls associated with the current lists to make sure these issues are resolved



The screenshot shows a webpage with a purple header containing the 'ndis' logo. Below the header, the title 'Supports that are 'NDIS supports'' is displayed in bold purple text. The main content area contains two paragraphs: 'There are 37 categories of goods and services that are 'NDIS supports'' and 'NDIS supports are the services, items and equipment that can be funded by the NDIS.' The URL 'ndis.gov.au' is visible at the bottom left of the page.

## New assessment tools

- A new tool will be adopted or developed for needs based assessments. These changes will be implemented over a period of 5 years.
- The agency has also put out a request for information around targeted assessment tools that cover support areas such as complex AT and home modifications
- At this stage, this is just a scoping exercise to see whether there are any existing tools that are fit for purpose and can be adapted for the NDIS environment



## Preferred provider lists for AT

- Suppliers would need to go through an additional process that is separate from the process of becoming a registered provider under the scheme
- To be listed as a preferred provider, suppliers would need to demonstrate that they comply with a range of different requirements e.g. compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, price transparency etc
- ATSA is very concerned about these changes and will be advocating against them



## What about those ineligible to access support under the NDIS?



**Under 65 years**



**myagedcare**

**65+ years**





## Average spend on assistive technology and home modifications

NDIS participants  
**\$2,500**  
Per person, per year

Aged care recipients  
**\$51**  
Per person, per year

## Recommendation 72 from the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety states:

*“...every person receiving aged care who is living with disability, regardless of when acquired, should receive through the aged care program daily living supports and outcomes (including assistive technologies, aids and equipment) equivalent to those that would be available under the National Disability Insurance Scheme to a person under the age of 65 years with the same or substantially similar conditions.”*

## AT funding under Support at Home

- A new Assistive Technology and Home Modifications (AT-HM) Scheme will be introduced from 1 July 2025
- This scheme will provide eligible Support at Home participants with dedicated funding for assistive technology and home modifications – on top of their assessed package level





# The National Assistive Technology Loans Scheme

- The new AT-HM Scheme will be underpinned by a **loan-before-buy** principle
- This will involve establishing a **central pool** from which equipment is loaned and later refurbished for redistribution (where appropriate)
- A **National Assistive Technology Loans Scheme** is being established to support this approach
- Intended to be administered through **existing state-based aids and equipment, or local area health programs**

## The EnableNSW AT Loans Scheme Trial

- Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, in partnership with NSW Health
- Explore a possible service model for the National Assistive Technology Loans Scheme
- Leverage learnings from the EnableNSW Equipment Allocation Program
- Commenced on 29 July and is expected to run for a 12-month period
- South West Sydney and Riverina/Murray Aged Care Planning Regions





The Department is **prematurely fast tracking** the national rollout of a government owned and operated loans model **without**:

- The EnableNSW AT Loans Scheme Trial having concluded or been independently evaluated
- Having properly assessed the capabilities and constraints of jurisdictions outside NSW
- Being able to articulate how this model will actively contribute to the successful implementation of Recommendation 72 from the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety
- Having actively considered how alternative models could provide better outcomes

Experience tells us that the model that's being proposed **will ultimately fail** to:

- effectively **meet the needs** of Support at Home participants
- support the **broader sustainability** of the assistive technology sector, or
- provide the **best return on investment** for government.





## Our key concerns with the proposed model

- Conflicting federal, state and local policies can disrupt AT loan pool delivery
- Shared responsibility across government levels may lead to cost-shifting, affecting service quality
- Inconsistent policies at state and local levels can result in inequitable access to AT
- Access may be inequitable due to differences in local policies and availability, especially in rural areas
- Tracking AT through different systems is difficult, leading to monitoring gaps
- Procurement differences at state and local levels complicate standardisation







## What's next for ATSA?

- Over the past month, we have been actively consulting with ATSA members and relevant sector groups
- We are currently in the process of collating and analysing all feedback we have received
- We will be using this feedback to inform a **position statement** to outline our concerns and proposed solutions
- We will also develop an **advocacy strategy** to determine how ATSA and other supporting organisations can push for a model that will better meet the needs of all stakeholders

**For further information or enquiries, contact:**

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# Want to become an ATSA member?

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- Visit the ATSA Team at **stall 106**
- Download a copy of our membership form from the ATSA website

