

**Inquiry into Assistive Technology**

**Reference No:** SQ18-000251

**TOPIC: CHANGES TO AT PROCESS**

**Hearing:** 19 October 2018

**Hansard Page:** N/A

**Question:**

The committee understands that the Agency is trialling changes to the AT process.

- a. How will this differ from what is currently occurring?
- b. When does the Agency expect that the new approach will be rolled out?
- c. The new process will apparently require all trials and applications to be completed before planning meetings. Is this correct? Does the Agency anticipate any challenges with this approach?
- d. How will the new approach address delays experienced by some participants?

**Answer:**

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) has already trialled and implemented (in May 2018) changes to the Assistive Technology (AT) process, most notably for low cost AT. The NDIA has recently commenced initial tests that will inform a pilot scheduled for early 2019 to streamline the AT and Home Modifications process and, as much as possible, ensure assessment and pricing is finalised during the pre-planning phase.

- a) Currently, assessment for more complex AT is undertaken after a plan is approved. This often requires a further decision from a delegate which can lead to delay. The new process will ensure a high quality and consistent assessment of a participant's AT needs is undertaken, where required, during the pre-planning phase. This will provide the information necessary to finalise the plan with no requirement for further NDIA approvals before the participant implements that plan.
- b) The new approach will be piloted in southern New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory in early 2019. This will inform any adjustments and refinements necessary before the revised approach is rolled out nationally toward the end of 2019. Other interim strategies to improve participants' AT experience are being progressively rolled out in the coming months.
- c) The new process will require a broad specialised assessment of participant AT need to be completed to inform the supports (generically described) and budget included in the approved plan. This will be completed prior to the planning meeting. It is anticipated that most participants will then work with their provider of choice to trial and select the most appropriate specific AT for their needs once the plan is approved. The pilot will enable the NDIA and stakeholders to explore and address the balance between thorough assessment of participant need and timely delivery of National Disability Insurance Scheme plans and the associated supports. Improvements and adjustments would be implemented before national roll out.

- d) The new approach simplifies provision of supports where the need is straight forward and provides a more timely, robust and consistent method to quantify participant AT need where supports are more complex. This will result in more consistent planning and less uncertainty for participants and providers when seeking to implement a plan, thus reducing delay.

Inquiry into Assistive Technology

Reference No: SQ18-000252

**TOPIC: COMPLEX AT ASSESSMENT**

Hearing: 19 October 2018

Hansard Page: N/A

**Question:**

The committee understands that the NDIA will pilot the use of a panel of specialised AT assessors commencing in Q3 2018-19 and that the national rollout is expected to commence in Q1 2019-20.

- a. How is this expected to improve the process?
- b. How will the Agency ensure that a wide breadth of disability and AT knowledge is held by the panel?

**Answer:**

- a) The panel of specialised Assistive Technology (AT) assessors will be experienced AT practitioners. They will work with the participant and review previous reports and advice to understand the participant's short and long-term AT requirements.

This specialised AT assessment will help the participant and planner construct a clear and complete plan that includes the scope and necessary funding for defined AT supports. The participant and their preferred providers can then conduct more-detailed evaluation, trial and implementation, without seeking further approval from the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA).

During the pilot, the NDIA will test and refine this approach to ensure it offers the highest likelihood of successful plan implementation and delivers expected outcomes in a timely way.

- b) The AT assessor panel will:
  - have specialist expertise in categories of disability (physical, neurological, cognitive, autism spectrum disorder and developmental delay, sensory, complex and multi-condition),
  - be required by contract to ensure appropriate assessor skill and ongoing competence; and
  - receive support from the NDIA to ensure the consistent use of good AT and clinical practice and NDIA guidance.



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Inquiry into Assistive Technology

Reference No: SQ18-000254

**TOPIC: SHORTAGE OF AT ASSESSORS (DATA)**

Hearing: 19 October 2018

Hansard Page: N/A

**Question:**

At 30 June 2018, 68% of participants had AT in their plan. How many of these required an AT assessment to be conducted (i.e. level 2 and above)?

**Answer:**

Of the active participants with Assistive Technology ('AT') supports in their most recent plan as at 30 June 2018, it is estimated that around 29,000 participants (25%) required an AT assessment to be conducted.

AT supports have been broadly defined to include a range of technological solutions including assistive equipment, home modifications (excluding Specialist Disability Accommodation), continence aids and daily adaptive equipment supports.



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**Inquiry into Assistive Technology**

**Reference No:** SQ18-000255

**TOPIC: PROCESSING OF APPLICATIONS**

**Hearing:** 19 October 2018

**Hansard Page:** N/A

**Question:**

Who considers and processes AT applications? What is the process?

**Answer:**

A planning delegate considers whether or not to include Assistive Technology (AT) supports in a plan based on the evidence available at the time of the planning meeting. They make a reasonable and necessary decision as part of the plan approval process. For some complex AT, or where the funding required to provide a support is unclear, the delegate may include an AT support item and indicate that a detailed assessment and a quote is required to establish the funding to be provided. In these cases, participants use capacity building funding to engage AT assessors (typically allied health professionals) to prepare the assessment and source quotes. When the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) receives the assessment and quote, the funding amount is set and the participant can source the necessary AT.



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**Inquiry into Assistive Technology**

**Reference No:** SQ18-000256

**TOPIC: PROCESSING OF APPLICATIONS**

**Hearing:** 19 October 2018

**Hansard Page:** N/A

**Question:**

Does the Agency set KPIs for the length of time staff must consider and process applications within?

**Answer:**

The National Disability Insurance Agency does not currently set Key Performance Indicators for the length of time staff must consider Assistive Technology applications.

**Inquiry into Assistive Technology**

**Reference No:** SQ18-000257

**TOPIC: PROCESSING OF APPLICATIONS**

**Hearing:** 19 October 2018

**Hansard Page:** N/A

**Question:**

How many staff are in the Technical Advisory Team? How many applications are they processing a day?

**Answer:**

The National Disability Insurance Agency's Technical Advisory Team (TAT) currently has 27.1 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staff, including advisors that provide support, technical advice and information to staff regarding capital supports (Assistive Technology and vehicle and home modifications). The TAT does not process applications but provides advice and technical support.



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**Inquiry into Assistive Technology**

**Reference No:** SQ18-000258

**TOPIC: PROCESSING OF APPLICATIONS**

**Hearing:** 19 October 2018

**Hansard Page:** N/A

**Question:**

What is the average length of time taken to process applications and communicate a result to participants?

**Answer:**

The National Disability Insurance Agency does not currently hold data that captures the average length of time to process applications and communicate a result to participants.





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Inquiry into Assistive Technology

Reference No: SQ18-000259

**TOPIC: PROCESSING OF APPLICATIONS**

Hearing: 19 October 2018

Hansard Page: N/A

**Question:**

What are the qualifications of staff processing applications?

**Answer:**

Planners process the majority of applications; however, they can seek advice from a specialist team when necessary. There are no specific qualifications required when recruiting planning staff, but position descriptions describe a desirable skillset, including experience in disability support and allied health.

The National Disability Insurance Agency's Technical Advisory Team (TAT) consists of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) who have expertise in specialist areas and general advisors. All Advisors have a background in the health or disability sectors.

TAT staff qualifications of those assessing capital requests for advice include qualifications in Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Audiology, Speech Pathology, Prosthetics and Orthotics, and Orientation and Mobility.

**Inquiry into Assistive Technology**

**Reference No:** SQ18-000260

**TOPIC: PROCESSING OF APPLICATIONS**

**Hearing:** 19 October 2018

**Hansard Page:** N/A

**Question:**

Is it standard practice to reject applications—regardless of when the application was made—if the application is considered by the Agency within 3 months of a scheduled plan review? Does this apply for very young participants and those living with degenerative conditions?

**Answer:**

No. If an application is made within three months of a scheduled plan review, a plan review is triggered at that time.

The National Disability Insurance Agency has guidance to prioritise certain requests, including for:

- children with a rate of developmental changes affecting need;
- people with broken equipment in urgent need of replacement due to risk; and
- people with progressive neurological conditions where support needs change rapidly.



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**Inquiry Assistive Technology**

**Reference No:** SQ18-000261

**TOPIC: PROCESSING OF APPLICATIONS**

**Hearing:** 19 October 2018

**Hansard Page:** N/A

**Question:**

How does the Agency ensure urgent AT applications are escalated?

**Answer:**

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) has published information on the NDIS website to support participants and providers to make contact about specific, urgent Assistive Technology (AT) cases. The NDIA has also provided guidance on a consistent way to indicate where urgent attention is required. The National Contact Centre has been provided guidance to track and, where needed, escalate urgent AT issues.

A central team of senior planners and AT advisors is monitoring these emails and helping resolve escalations as quickly as possible. The NDIA has committed to responding to all such cases within two business days.



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**Inquiry into Assistive Technology**

**Reference No:** SQ18-000262

**TOPIC: PROCESSING OF APPLICATIONS**

**Hearing:** 19 October 2018

**Hansard Page:** N/A

**Question:**

Does the Agency have an arrangement for AT emergencies?

**Answer:**

Depending on the situation, if a participant requires urgent access to Assistive Technology (AT) or has AT that is not functioning adequately, their plan provides the flexibility to hire the substitute AT at late notice. The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) can also work with state and territory AT programs to make emergency equipment available and undertake urgent repairs, which are then paid for from the participant's plan.

If a participant experiences AT faults or failure that puts them at significant risk of hospitalisation or death, they must contact the appropriate emergency response organisation (i.e. hospital or ambulance services).

The NDIA encourages participants to arrange appropriate coverage for AT repair and maintenance, and plans include funding to facilitate this.

**Inquiry into Assistive Technology**

**Reference No:** SQ18-000263

**PROCESSING OF APPLICATIONS**

**Hearing:** 19 October 2018

**Hansard Page:** N/A

**Question:**

How will the newly established National Assistive Technology & Home Modifications (ATHM) team assist with remediating delays in AT approvals?

**Answer:**

The National Assistive Technology (AT) and Home Modifications team is improving AT processes and implementing solutions to reduce delays and help participants awaiting AT decisions. Priority changes to be released before the end of 2018 will support:

- access to appropriate repairs and maintenance support and replacement AT, where required; and
- acceptance of AT assessment documentation from approved organisations (e.g. hospital discharge reports and state AT funding program approval letters).

In addition, a dedicated group of planners and specialist advisors is being formed to review urgent cases and expedite plan adjustments and approvals.



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Inquiry into Assistive Technology

Reference No: SQ18-000264

**TOPIC: PROCESSING OF APPLICATIONS**

Hearing: 19 October 2018

Hansard Page: N/A

**Question:**

The committee received evidence that AT applications are being wrongly rejected or delayed where consultation with the prescribing expert would have clarified aspects of the application and helped its timely approval. Why are staff considering applications not contacting the prescribing therapist to clarify applications?

**Answer:**

If an Assistive Technology (AT) application does not include sufficient information, delegates can request further information from the participant or, if the participant has consented, directly from the assessor (e.g. Occupational Therapist, Physiotherapist, Speech Pathologist, Audiologist or prosthetist). NDIS delegates are unable to contact assessors if there is no consent provided.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme website provides guidance, resources and AT assessment templates, to help AT assessors provide all information required for applications to be approved in a timely fashion.



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**Inquiry into Assistive Technology**

**Reference No:** SQ18-000265

**TOPIC: PROCESSING OF APPLICATIONS**

**Hearing:** 19 October 2018

**Hansard Page:** N/A

**Question:**

Submitters expressed frustration at the need to complete a separate document for every AT request. Are there plans to allow multiple AT items to be requested on one application?

**Answer:**

Yes. While the current templates permit the inclusion of multiple items, the NDIA acknowledges that further improvements are required. The NDIA is currently redesigning the templates to make them more simple and easy-to-use, including allowing multiple AT items.

**Inquiry into Assistive Technology**

**Reference No:** SQ18-000266

**TOPIC: DIRECT REPLACEMENT**

**Hearing:** 19 October 2018

**Hansard Page:** N/A

**Question:**

The NDIA aims to allow replacement items (particularly like-for-like) to be sourced quickly without needing reassessment in Q2 2018–19. How will this work in practice?

**Answer:**

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) has developed a simplified form to guide participants, providers and planners and outline what must be met for replacement items to be added to plans as reasonable and necessary supports without further assessment. Requirements include evidence that:

- the Assistive Technology (AT) is still being effectively used without any foreseeable risk to the participant;
- the existing AT item has reached the last stages of its useful service life; and
- a suitable replacement that is of equivalent function and value is available.

Once the requirements are met, the planner can approve the proposed support as reasonable and necessary and allocate the appropriate level of funding.

This new approach recently commenced testing in several sites in New South Wales.





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Inquiry into Assistive Technology

Reference No: SQ18-000267

**TOPIC: TRACKING APPLICATION STATUS**

Hearing: 19 October 2018

Hansard Page: N/A

**Question:**

Has the Agency investigated implementing a function on the portal to allow participants to track the status of their AT application?

**Answer:**

Yes. The National Disability Insurance Agency is designing a method to track participant and provider Assistive Technology requests in its business systems. When implemented, participants and providers will be able to view the status of individual applications in their *myplace* portals. The NDIA anticipates changes to its business systems to be implemented in the first half of 2019.

Inquiry into Assistive Technology

Reference No: SQ18-000268

**TOPIC: TRIAL REQUIREMENTS**

Hearing: 19 October 2018

Hansard Page: N/A

**Question:**

The Scheme requires that participants undertake trials of equipment before AT will be funded in plans, however, this may be inappropriate in certain circumstances. For example, some specialised equipment is only available from international suppliers where no trial is possible, or for participants in regional or remote areas.

a) What process is available to participants in these circumstances?

**Answer:**

Generally, trial of Assistive Technology (AT) is recommended before approving funding for complex, high risk or specialised AT. A trial is generally not required for AT that is considered low risk, noting that exploring and trialling options may help the participant make the best selection for their circumstances.

Supporting information gathered in a trial can also demonstrate whether a support is likely to be effective and beneficial for the participant, as required under the *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013*. This is considered by NDIA delegates making decisions about whether supports can be funded.

The NDIA is exploring strategies and pricing structures to enable the AT market to improve access for participants to evaluate AT items before purchase.

There may be situations where trial is not possible, such as when the participant requires a custom support manufactured for their individual needs. Where participants are unable to trial the proposed AT, the NDIA looks for evidence that a successful outcome is expected, such as past experience with a similar item, telehealth-based evaluations (particularly for rural or remote participants), or clinical justification and opinion provided by an appropriately-qualified and experienced assessor.

**Inquiry into Assistive Technology**

**Reference No:** SQ18-000269

**TOPIC: ASSOCIATED AT COSTS**

**Hearing:** 19 October 2018

**Hansard Page:** N/A`

**Question:**

The committee received feedback that the number of hours included in plans for assessment, trials, travel, report writing, and training in equipment are regularly underestimated?

- a) How does the Agency plan to ensure adequate funding is provided in plans for AT equipment trials?
- b) What guidelines on typical costs of AT and associated costs of AT are provided to planners to assist them create high quality plans for participants?

**Answer:**

- a) The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) recently made changes, described in the NDIA submission, to reduce the administrative burden that supporting participants selecting and accessing AT has on providers. These changes will also help manage assessment costs, through contracted arrangements with a specialised panel of providers to inform the planning process. In establishing a plan, adequate funding will be included to enable AT advisors and suppliers to help participants select and trial AT solutions.
- b) The NDIA's current estimate of costs is informed by knowledge developed during National Disability Insurance Scheme trials and transition, and has been tested and refined by provider claiming practices. Other costs potentially associated with selection, trial and maintenance of AT have been assumed based on usual sector experience. The NDIA notes that 'other associated costs' can vary dramatically depending on participant location, provider experience and capability and market maturity. The NDIA regularly engages with the AT sector to ensure these assumptions continue to be appropriate.



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**Inquiry into Assistive Technology**

**Reference No:** SQ18-000270

**TOPIC: UNSCHEDULED PLAN REVIEWS**

**Hearing:** 19 October 2018

**Hansard Page:** N/A

**Question:**

Since 1 July 2016, how many participants have undergone an unscheduled plan review as a result of insufficient funding for AT?

**Answer:**

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) does not collect structured data on the reason for triggering an unscheduled plan review.

Inquiry into Assistive Technology

Reference No: SQ18-000271

**TOPIC: MAINSTREAM TECHNOLOGY**

Hearing: 19 October 2018

Hansard Page: n/a

**Question:**

The NDIS AT Strategy paper appears to be in favour of tablets and smartphones. It states that:

- a) 'AT in the NDIS includes devices used by people without disabilities (e.g. smartphones, tablets and 'apps') that are offering new ways to form connections and increase participation';
- b) 'the Agency is committed to keeping up to date with changes to main stream technology and how they can benefit people with disability'; and
- c) 'smartphones and tablets are offering potential solutions in some parts of the disability sector. These require further investigation and efforts to encourage take-up, given tablets and smartphones may provide similar functionality to a specialist disability device and are generally lower cost'.

Indeed, Table 2 in the AT Strategy shows recommended AT items for central sourcing, one of which is 'commercial tablets'. However, the committee has repeatedly received feedback from stakeholders that smartphones and tablets are being rejected by the Scheme as they are considered 'mainstream technology'.

Are tablets and smartphones able to be funded by the Scheme if they are found to provide the most cost effective option that best meets the participant's needs?

**Answer:**

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) may fund reasonable and necessary information and communication technology supports that specifically address a participant's functional needs associated with their disability.

Normally, the NDIS would not fund everyday items used by most Australians, but would provide funding to make such items accessible to a participant through training or peripherals. Tablets (including iPads), smartphones and phone and data plans are generally considered day-to-day living costs, and not something the NDIS can fund.

Funding to purchase a tablet may be considered reasonable and necessary in some cases, such as when the tablet is a stand-alone communication device required due to a person's disability.

**Inquiry into Assistive Technology**

**Reference No:** SQ18-000272

**TOPIC: AT REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE**

**Hearing:** 19 October 2018

**Hansard Page:** N/A

**Question:**

The NDIA aims to introduce a mechanism to calculate an appropriate budget for comprehensive repair and maintenance coverage that is expected in Q2 2018–19.

a. How will this calculation and mechanism work?

**Answer:**

The National Disability Insurance Scheme funds the cost of repair and maintenance (R&M) for normal wear and tear of participants' Assistive Technology (AT) supports.

This quarter, the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) is engaging with the AT sector to explore market-based arrangements to meet demand for R&M services nationally and increase participant choice. There are a number of AT R&M service providers currently operating to service state-based AT schemes. The NDIA will be consulting many of these providers about their potential service capability, geographic coverage and cost structures under a national scheme. A calculation method to set an appropriate budget for R&M coverage for participants will follow this consultation process.

The NDIA will provide participants information to help them choose R&M service providers that meet quality and safety requirements and are suitable for their needs. Not all participants will require R&M coverage 24-hours a day, 7-days a week, and these choices will be reflected in their plan budget and market options.



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Inquiry into Assistive Technology

Reference No: SQ18-000273

**TOPIC: FLEXIBLE EQUIPMENT PACKAGES**

Hearing: 19 October 2018

Hansard Page: N/A

**Question:**

Page 7 of the NDIA submission refers to flexible equipment packages for participants with degenerative conditions. Could the Agency please elaborate?

**Answer:**

Planning for participants with degenerative conditions must take into account that the participant's support needs are likely to change often during the life of the plan. It is essential the plan contains sufficient supports for its 12-month duration to reduce the need for plan reviews as the condition progresses and the participant experiences greater functional loss. To facilitate this, planners can include a funding budget for accessing Assistive Technology (AT) pools operated by specialist organisations (such as the Motor Neurone Disease Association of New South Wales) or state and territory AT programs. Such AT pools provide flexible access supports, without delay, as support needs change, and minimise the administrative costs to providers.



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**Inquiry into Assistive Technology**

**Reference No:** SQ18-000274

**TOPIC: MULTIPLE QUOTES**

**Hearing:** 19 October 2018

**Hansard Page:** N/A

**Question:**

Evidence indicates that participants are being asked to provide multiple quotes to the Agency for AT.

- a. What process is available to participants who are unable source multiple quotes for equipment, for example, where there is an absence of alternative options?

**Answer:**

If a participant is unable to source a second quote requested to ensure value for money, they can advise the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), which can undertake an internal review of the price.

The NDIA is also introducing a new funding tool that can calculate appropriate Assistive Technology (AT) funding for reasonable and necessary AT supports. This will replace the current reliance on quotes for higher cost items. The new tool will be introduced progressively starting with the most-common AT items.



**Inquiry into Assistive Technology**

**Reference No:** SQ18-000275

**TOPIC: MULTIPLE QUOTES**

**Hearing:** 19 October 2018

**Hansard Page:** N/A

**Question:**

The committee is pleased to hear that the Agency is working on introducing a new funding tool to calculate appropriate funding for AT supports to replace the current reliance on quotes.

- a. How will this work in practice?
- b. How does the tool calculate appropriate funding?

**Answer:**

- a. A funding tool will provide objective information for planners to establish reasonable budgets for participants' approved Assistive Technology (AT) supports to include in plans prior to participants approaching the market and procuring the support.

The tool will primarily provide information for the types of AT which represent a significant volume of the AT supports funded by the National Disability Insurance Scheme. This will improve the speed of budget approval for the bulk of AT supports and reserve more rigorous approval processes for higher cost or more complex AT supports.

- b. The National Disability Insurance Agency's (NDIA) approach to calculating appropriate funding is using price data for AT supports collected by the NDIA and other sources to establish reasonable price benchmarks for a variety of commonly used AT supports.

As the NDIA refines its categories of AT and receives further payment requests from providers for actual AT supplied to participants, the funding tool will improve the accuracy of forecast budgets and the monitoring of price and market trends.

**Inquiry into Assistive Technology**

**Reference No:** SQ18-000276

**TOPIC: INTERFACE WITH STATE-BASED PROGRAMS**

**Hearing:** 19 October 2018

**Hansard Page:** N/A

**Question:**

Feedback indicates there is unnecessary duplication in the application process when equipment is supplied through state-based organisations. Is there scope to streamline the process?

**Answer:**

During trial and transition, the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) has drawn on the expertise of state and territory programs to assist with quality assurance checks of Assistive Technology (AT) assessment and provision of reliable access to common AT for participants.

In some cases (for example, Victoria), the state equipment program has altered their online submission tool to receive National Disability Insurance Scheme related assessments as part of their assistance in providing quality assurance before passing to the NDIA for reasonable and necessary decisions. This may appear to stakeholders as duplication or the application of state program requirements/rules, but it is primarily a means to process these assessments. No state or territory program requirements influence the NDIA's decision on supports.

The NDIA is further streamlining these arrangements and increasingly providers will be able to submit assessments, when required, directly to the NDIA.



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Inquiry into Assistive Technology

Reference No: SQ18-000277

**TOPIC: INTERFACE WITH STATE-BASED PROGRAMS**

Hearing: 19 October 2018

Hansard Page:

**Question:**

Can NDIS participants use their plans to hire AT from state-based loan pools?

**Answer:**

In certain circumstances, National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants can access state-based equipment loan pools. Under the *National Disability Insurance Scheme (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013*, NDIS delegates consider the cost of purchasing or leasing equipment when determining whether Assistive Technology (AT) supports meet value for money.

Not all government-operated state-based loan pools offer a hire service. Some state programs do not provide supports to 'self-managed' NDIS participants. In these cases, participants can have AT supports they wish to hire marked as 'agency managed' so they can use these programs.



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Inquiry into Assistive Technology

Reference No: SQ18-000278

**TOPIC: INTERFACE WITH STATE-BASED PROGRAMS**

Hearing: 19 October 2018

Hansard Page: N/A

**Question:**

The committee understands that the Agency is working with EnableNSW on a loan pool integration initiative. What is this and how will it work?

**Answer:**

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) became aware in September 2018 of the plans of Healthshare New South Wales (NSW) (through their EnableNSW operation) to establish a coordinated pool of common Assistive Technology (AT) across NSW hospital and community health facilities by July 2019. The focus of this project is to facilitate timely hospital discharge and more efficient management of the AT loan fleet. Although the NDIA supports market initiatives such as this to offer flexible access to AT to people with disabilities, it has not yet had extensive discussion with EnableNSW about the application of their model for National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants.

The NDIA will continue to work with the market on flexible ways for participants to access supports. This may include methods to minimise disruption for participants as they transition between systems, such as during rehabilitation. An appropriate AT solution (for example, an adjustable bed) could initially be supplied through a well maintained loan pool. If the item proves appropriate for long term use to meet the participant's functional need and address their NDIS goals, the participant could utilise their NDIS plan funds to continue to use that particular item (through purchase or a longer term lease), rather than sourcing a new item and then returning the original item to the loan pool.



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**Inquiry into Assistive Technology**

**Reference No:** SQ18-000279

**TOPIC: AT RECYCLING**

**Hearing:** 19 October 2018

**Hansard Page:** N/A

**Question:**

Are there plans to introduce a centralised system to recycle AT equipment that has been bought under the NDIS but is no longer required by the participant?

**Answer:**

The National Disability Insurance Scheme provides funding to assist participants access reasonable and necessary supports, including Assistive Technology (AT). Some participants will use this funding to purchase their AT outright and become the owner responsible for its care and maintenance. Others will choose to use a lease or hire arrangement where ownership is not transferred and repairs, maintenance and replacement are the responsibility of the provider.

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) is consulting and engaging with the AT provider sector to develop a coordinated approach to services that can acquire, refurbish, resell and when appropriate, recycle used AT. The next workshop with AT providers on this topic is scheduled for late November 2018, with a further workshop to be scheduled before the end of the calendar year. This will offer options for participants seeking to maximise the value from their funding and the NDIA would encourage use of these services by participants who have AT they no longer require.



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**Inquiry into Assistive Technology**

**Reference No:** SQ18-000280

**TOPIC: AT RECYCLING**

**Hearing:** 19 October 2018

**Hansard Page:** N/A

**Question:**

The committee understands that the Agency is trialling a new approach for access to stock equipment. How will this differ from the existing approach?

**Answer:**

In late 2017, the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) commenced a trial that assisted staff with access to government-coordinated Assistive Technology (AT) pricing (EnableNSW stock items) to incorporate directly into participants' plans where these items were appropriate. This eliminated the need for a quote and also assisted in reducing the waiting times for many items for participants who chose to source through EnableNSW.

The NDIA is currently discussing with EnableNSW the effectiveness and potential extension of these arrangements across the state and the safeguards necessary to prevent adverse impact – for example, reduced competition – on the broader AT market.



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**Inquiry into Assistive Technology**

**Reference No:** SQ18-000281

**TOPIC: BULK PROCUREMENT**

**Hearing:** 19 October 2018

**Hansard Page:** N/A

**Question:**

Is the Agency investigating bulk procurement for commonly used AT items?

**Answer:**

At this stage, the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) is not investigating bulk procurement for commonly used Assistive Technology items as this does not support the National Disability Insurance Scheme principle of participants being able to exercise choice and control. If participants are unable to access items, the NDIA will consider how to assist the market to fulfil this need as part of market monitoring and enablement.

**Inquiry into Assistive Technology**

**Reference No:** SQ18-000282

**TOPIC: AT STRATEGY**

**Hearing:** 19 October 2018

**Hansard Page:** N/A

**Question:**

The committee heard good feedback about the AT Strategy. When does the Agency plan to implement the Strategy?

**Answer:**

The implementation of the Assistive Technology (AT) Strategy is an ongoing and iterative process that has been underway since the Strategy was released in 2015.

During trial and transition, the methods to implement some elements of the AT Strategy have needed to be adjusted in response to legislative requirements and participant needs. The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) remains committed to the strategic principles described in the AT Strategy and has progressed aspects of innovation, participant capability and market development in this regard. During late 2017, it became apparent that participants and providers were experiencing difficulties in achieving AT outcomes in a timely way. Consequently, the NDIA focus has been to improve the experience of participants and providers; the basis of the AT and Home Modifications redesign and remediation work. Aspects of the AT Strategy, including participant capability development and recognition, have been included in the revised processes for AT assessment and planning now implemented or under development.

Recently, the NDIA has begun to accelerate its market stewardship role in AT, as described in the AT Strategy, to align with the improved NDIA planning processes. As supply lead times from the market can cause delay in delivery of AT to participants, the NDIA will continue to offer improved information and demand guidance to the market in line with the AT Strategy. In addition, the NDIA is working with the market to address supply challenges such as wider access to loan or leased AT pools and improved repair and maintenance coverage. Combined with encouragement for market innovation, this should assist participants with AT needs identified and funded in their NDIS plans to access appropriate solutions to address those needs.