

A practical guide to assistive technology and the NDIS

In this webinar, we'll deep dive into the equipment, technology and devices (assistive technology) that help you, or your person, do things you can't do because of your disability. We'll cover the following:

- What does the NDIS mean by assistive technology
- What assistive technology is funded by the NDIS & the difference between low, mid and high cost assistive technology
- What are the steps to get assistive technology in your plan
- Any questions you have!

Presenting tonight:

Alexandra Browne – Senior Support Coordinator/
Psychosocial Recovery Coach/ Access Manager



Acknowledgement of Country

I would like to begin today by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet today, and pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. I extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples here today.



Assistive Technology explained

- Assistive technology is equipment or devices that help an individual do things they can't do as a result of their disability.
- Assistive technology may also help an individual do something more easily or safely.
- All NDIS supports must meet the reasonable and necessary criteria.
- NDIA cannot fund Assistive Technology items that are more appropriately funded by other government services (for example health or education).



NDIS budgets and limits within for Assistive Technology

There are three different budgets in an NDIS plan but for assistive technology it can come out of two different budgets.

1. A person's **CORE** budget where they can have funding in there for Low-Cost Assistive Technology. This is up to \$1500 per item. It needs to be low cost and low risk; this criteria is clarified further below.
2. A person's **CAPITAL** budget where there can be funding for mid (\$1500-15000) and high cost (\$15000 and above).



NDIA's vision around Assistive Technology:

Knowing the vision and action the NDIA are planning to take with Assistive Technology is helpful in the design process to ensure it adheres to the above guidelines and the below vision.

NDIA's vision for improved assistive technology (AT) provision:

1. Informed participants optimising their use of AT to pursue home and living goals
2. Improved processes that reduce planning delays and reviews.
3. Improved Scheme sustainability through:
4. Effective, consistent supply and pricing
5. Reduced recurring costs
6. Ensuring the AT provided is working as it should and delivering good outcomes.



Action Plan from the NDIA

- The NDIA have an Action Plan which is their strategy for achieving their vision around Assistive Technology for people with disabilities.
- Link to their strategy which outlines their Action Plan for 2021-2023.

<https://www.ndis.gov.au/about-us/strategies/assistive-technology-strategy>



Understanding the product 'risk' categories

NDIA use 2 product risk categories ('low' and 'higher') to assess the complexity of a person's AT needs. This is important to understand because higher risk products need more assessment and justifications and takes a lot longer to get funded for an individual which can impact on whether they choose that item or one that they can get funded quicker and also the length of time for approval which delays payment to the provider.

Low risk AT products are:

- unlikely to cause harm in day-to-day life
- available for trial and / or can be purchased in retail stores
- easy to set up and safely use without professional advice.



Understanding the product 'risk' categories

Higher risk AT products may be one or all of the following:

- complex, such as a power wheelchair
- known to have caused harm
- used for a restrictive practice
- require professional advice, setup or training for safe use.



Low, mid and high cost assistive technology

It's best to buy some items. For other items, it might be better to rent or borrow them. This is true if the person's needs are likely to change and this might be what they want to do. It is important to know that this is an option for people accessing the NDIS as renting your products might be something that needs to be considered for the individual. However, if purchasing they fall into one of three categories which was touched on before.

The NDIA has different processes for low, mid and high cost:

- Low cost and low risk assistive technology: under \$1,500 per item (just requires a quote and recommendation letter from an allied health professional and approval process is very quick).
- Mid cost assistive technology: between \$1,500 and \$15,000 per item (just requires a quote and recommendation letter from an allied health professional and approval is very quick).
- High cost and high risk assistive technology: over \$15,000 per item (These items require a full Assistive Technology Assessment and quote and approval. This can take up to 3 months to approve.)

Risk level	Broad description	Examples (non exclusive)
Low risk assistive technology products	<p>Products you or your family can choose, that need very little advice or setup support from <u>assistive technology advisors</u> to use them safely.</p> <p>There's a low risk of causing harm when used in daily living environments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Non-slip bathmat · Knives, forks or other eating utensils · Large print labels · Shower stool or chair · Handrails · Portable ramps · Mainstream computer technology
Higher risk assistive technology products	<p>All higher risk assistive technology products will generally need advice from an assistive technology advisor or <u>assistive technology assessor</u> for the right item selection and good outcomes.</p> <p>Items regulated by the Therapeutic Goods Administration in Australia are considered higher risk. We also rely on information from the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Bed sticks and other transfer aids · Items that potentially restrict voluntary movement (including bed rails/covers, weighted blankets) · Powered devices for magnification, hearing etc. · Mobility and postural support or correction devices · Motor vehicle adaptations · Pressure care devices · Beds adjustable while occupied · Prosthetics; orthotics · Devices to support breathing

How to get Assistive Technology in your plan?

There are a few ways to get assistive technology in your plan:

- You can talk to the LAC or planner at the planning meeting about getting assistive technology in your plan and what that might be. Depending on what that is they might put some funding in your plan for the equipment or they may put money in for the assessment needed before the NDIA can approve the equipment or they may build the equipment into the plan but it isn't visible or able to be used until you have a quote approved.
- If you already have a plan you can request a plan reassessment or variation to your plan through a change in situation.



Does the support meet the reasonable and necessary criteria?

For a support to be considered including assistive technology it always needs to meet all the funding criteria before it can be included in the plan.

1. Support will help you to achieve your goals
2. Support will assist you to undertake activities to facilitate your social and economic participation by reducing the disability specific barriers you are facing.
3. Represents value for money so the support is reasonable relative to both the benefits achieved and the cost of alternative supports.
4. The support will be or likely to be effective and beneficial for you in regard to good practice.
5. The support takes into account what it reasonable to expect from informal supports.
6. It is a support most appropriately funded by ndis



What evidence is required to get AT in your plan?

If you have been recommended a piece of equipment by your allied health professional, a continence nurse or another professional and you want to have that built into the plan without having to wait you need evidence always whether it is low, mid or high cost.

- If the assistive technology falls under low cost assistive technology then a supporting letter is all that is required however that supporting letter must go into detail of how it meets the reasonable and necessary criteria. It is not necessary but always helpful to get a quote.
- If the assistive technology falls under mid cost then it also needs a supporting letter. Depending on what the piece of equipment is the provider may need to do a more comprehensive assessment to ensure the suitability of the piece of equipment. It is also always helpful to get a quote.
- If it falls under high cost then it requires a full AT assessment and quote.



Repairs and maintenance

- The NDIA will include repairs and maintenance for equipment that you are currently using. It is just about letting them know what equipment you are using so they can ensure there is funding for the repairs and maintenance.
- You do not need an assessment to have these funds included it is based on whether you have a reasonable and necessary mid or high cost AT that you use.
- For small repairs like a tyre puncture it will be included in core under consumables. These cover all minor repairs.
- For major repairs like regular service then that is included in capital under assistive technology budget.



Replacement

If you need to replace your assistive technology this is possible through the NDIS.

- This might be if it doesn't work, keeps breaking down, dangerous to keep using, child has outgrown.

- It can be included in the capital assistive technology budget and if it is a like for like replacement even if it is a higher cost item it may not need an assessment. This is a discussion to be had in the planning or reassessment meeting.



Helpful links to understanding Assistive Technology & NDIS funding

- <https://ourguidelines.ndis.gov.au/supports-you-can-access-menu/equipment-and-technology/assistive-technology/what-assistive-technology-do-we-fund>
- <https://ourguidelines.ndis.gov.au/supports-you-can-access-menu/equipment-and-technology/assistive-technology/how-do-we-fund-assistive-technology>
- <https://ourguidelines.ndis.gov.au/supports-you-can-access-menu/equipment-and-technology/assistive-technology/what-other-assistive-technology-costs-do-we-fund>
- <https://ourguidelines.ndis.gov.au/supports-you-can-access-menu/equipment-and-technology/assistive-technology/what-if-you-need-replace-assistive-technology>
- <https://www.ndis.gov.au/providers/pricing-arrangements>

Questions?

