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What is Assistive Technology?

Assistive Technology is 'any device or system that allows individuals to perform tasks they would otherwise be unable to do or increases the ease and safety with which tasks can be performed'.

The NDIA uses four levels to describe the different complexity of AT.

This often influences how it is funded in a participant's plan, including the level of support needed to select and set it up.

Level 1 AT are simple and generally low cost items.

This can include modified cutlery for people with a hand or arm disability, or visual door bells for people who are hard of hearing.

In between, there are some items that you can walk in to a shop and try such as standard shower chairs while for others, you may need to be measured for the item to be made and adjusted to your specific needs – including set up for your home.

The most complex items are Level 4 AT – for example, specialised seating systems configured uniquely for a person with a significant spinal injury.

What is Basic and Standard Assistive Technology?

Basic (Level 1) Assistive Technology is low cost/low risk products from local retail suppliers and need no or very little assistance to set up and use. They might include items such as:

- Non-slip bathmat
- Large print labels
- Walking sticks
- Long handled shoe horn
- Tactile dots

You will be able buy these supports from everyday retailer suppliers such as hardware store, pharmacy or from the internet.

Standard (Level 2) "off the shelf" Assistive Technology can be easily accessed, tested, and trialed before you make your final choice. For example:

- Shower chair
- Hand rails

- Portable ramps

You can generally buy these items from specialised Assistive Technology suppliers.

What is Specialised and Complex Assistive Technology?

Specialised (Level 3) Assistive Technology is generally adjusted to suit your individual support needs and requires linking with other Assistive Technology supports and/or your home/work/place of study. It is important to make sure the Assistive Technology is supplied and setup correctly to avoid any risk of injury. For example:

- power/power-assist wheelchairs
- pressure mattresses
- bed sticks/poles
- mobile or ceiling hoists
- bath lifts
- Orthotics and Prosthetics non-complex
- Standard Home Modifications (simple or non-structural)

You can generally buy these items from specialised Assistive Technology suppliers in your local area.

Complex (Level 4) Assistive Technology is custom made or 'off the shelf' but adjusted to suit your individual support needs and requires linking with other Assistive Technology supports and/or your home/work/place of study. For example:

- Environmental control units
- Electronic mobility Assistive Technology for person who has a vision impairment
- High-level pressure cushions and pressure care sleep systems
- Orthotics and Prosthetics complex
- Communication devices complex
- Complex Home Modifications

You can generally buy these items from specialised Assistive Technology suppliers in your local area.

What is an Assistive Technology assessor?

An Assistive Technology assessor is someone who is able to consider your individual support needs and situation to identify the appropriate equipment items and/or Home Modifications to

meet your support needs. They may be an Occupational Therapist, Physiotherapist, Speech Pathologist, Psychologist or rehabilitation engineer. Identifying the most appropriate Assistive Technology assessor will depend on your individual support needs and the Assistive Technology and/or Home Modifications required.

Do I need advice from an Assistive Technology Assessor?

You **do not need** to provide the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) with Assistive Technology Assessor assessments, reports and/or quotes before you buy Basic (Level 1) or Standard (Level 2) Assistive Technology.

If you need help to select, buy and set up or to use your Assistive Technology correctly, you will have funding in your NDIS plan which you can use to have an Assistive Technology Assessor or other suitable advisor, assist you select, buy, set up or train you how to use Assistive Technology devices purchased with your NDIS funding.

How do I pay for my Assistive Technology?

There are a few different ways you can choose to pay for your Assistive Technology to avoid delays in receiving your Assistive Technology supports. Funding for basic (level 1) and standard (level 2) is generally:

- Self-Managed
- Plan Management Agency manages your funds

To give you flexibility when choosing your Assistive Technology supports, you can use the Independent Living Centre's website (external) or the internet to compare the options for Assistive Technology to ensure you get value for money.

Always use reputable suppliers who will be able to assist should you need to exchange or ask for replacement/repairs to your purchased Assistive Technology.

What if I need more complex Assistive Technology?

If you require more complex or expensive Assistive Technology, your Local Area Coordinator/planner will have discussed the process for obtaining an assessment, report and/or quotes for approval by the NDIS. Speak to your Local Area Coordinator or Support Coordinator for further information.

Some items may seem simple and low cost, but may be dangerous for some people or when they aren't correctly fitted or used. These are indicated below (usually as items that have a higher complexity) and advice is **strongly** recommended before you buy them.

How do I pay for repairs and maintenance for my Specialised and Complex Assistive Technology?

In your NDIS plan you will have funding included for repairs and/or maintenance to your Specialised (Level 3) and Complex (Level 4) Assistive Technology.

For **minor** repairs and/or maintenance such as a tyre puncture you can access your funding in the Daily Adaptive Equipment budget of your NDIS plan. This funding can be Self-Managed or you may have chosen a Plan Management Agency to allow you to access your supports without delay.

For **major** repairs and/or maintenance such as wheeled mobility device/wheelchair or prosthetic Assistive Technology over 3 years old, you can access your funding in the Assistive Technology budget of your NDIS plan or you may be required to provide a quote.

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