

Completing an NDIS AT Assessment Form for AAC Prescription

Tips & Suggestions from the Liberator Team

The current NDIS Assistive Technology “General Assessment Template” is available from this website:

<https://ndis.gov.au/providers/at/assessing-at.html#template>

Be sure to check you are using the latest version of the form.

Know your audience

- The person reading the report may not be a Speech Pathologist or Allied Health Professional. The document should be aimed at someone who does not have allied health knowledge.
- Avoid using jargon, acronyms or abbreviations. If they are being used be sure to specify them.
- Where possible, provide specific examples of successes or challenges that demonstrate the client’s needs. This can help the reader to get a better picture of why the prescribed AT is reasonable and necessary.
- The AT Assessment form will be written differently to a regular therapy report or clinical recommendation, which is usually strengths-based. It is important to remember that the NDIS is an insurance model funding scheme and different language & terminology is required.

Be evidence based

- Refer to data collected (e.g. Realize Language & Data Logs, GAS Goals – more info at <https://liberator.net.au/support/resources/realize>)
- Specify all environments that the AT was trialed in and progress in these environments
- Refer to research or articles that support the request

Use NDIS terms

- Always link the AT to NDIS goals within the client’s plan
- The participant’s permanent impairment/s need to be described in relation to activity limitations and the consequent impact on participation in daily, community and where appropriate, economic life.
- Read and specifically address the content prompts provided in each section of the AT template

Be familiar with the Reasonable and Necessary Supports (section 34 of the NDIS Act 2013)

- In order for any request to be approved by the NDIS it must meet ALL of the criteria outlined in the Extract from the NDIS Act: Reasonable and Necessary supports, listed on Page 2 of the AT form.
- Refer to the Reasonable and Necessary supports throughout the report and use the terms outlined such as; ‘value for money’, ‘supports social/economic participation’, ‘support is effective regarding current good practice’

Be familiar with the AT and Consumables Guide & the AT Level of Complexity Classification

(more information available here: <https://ndis.gov.au/providers/at/supplying-at.html>)

- Know what support item is being requested and refer specifically to the support item (e.g. dynamic display dialogue unit, eye gaze system, key guards)
- Know what Level of Complexity the AT being requested fits under. This will assist in determining the advisor characteristics and type of assessment required.

Support Item in AT and Consumables Guide	Description	Example
communication software for computer or tablet	Software to convert the computer or tablet to a communication device	Communication apps such as LAMP WFL, Proloquo2go and TouchChat
dynamic display dialogue units	Speech generating device that has a dynamic screen	Accent, NOVA Chat, Chat Fusion, Liberator Rugged 7
eye gaze system	Hardware and software accessed via eye gaze	Accent with NuEye
head pointer	Assistive product to access the screen	Accent with NuPoint
keyboards/ key guards	Guards that assist in accessing the screen	Touch guide

Useful websites

Summary of the NDIS Act:

http://www6.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdoc/au/legis/cth/consol_act/ndisa2013341/s34.html

NDIS Operational Guideline for AT:

<https://www.ndis.gov.au/Operational-Guideline/including-4.html>

NDIS Operational Guideline for Reasonable and Necessary Supports:

<https://www.ndis.gov.au/operational-guideline/planning/statement-participant-supports.html#9.2>

Summer Foundation: 'Getting the language right' – guide to writing reports for the NDIS:

<https://www.summerfoundation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/getting-the-language-right-web.pdf>

Valid: '10 Steps to Excellent NDIS Therapy Reports' – guide to writing reports for the NDIS:

<https://www.valid.org.au/sites/default/files/10-steps-to-excellent-National-Disability-Insurance-Scheme-NDIS-therapy-reports-v1.pdf>

Suggestions for information to include in the AT Assessment Report Template

These suggestions are based on successes and feedback from therapists, and have not been provided by the NDIA.

PART 2 – Participants Goals and AT assessment request

2.1 BACKGROUND

This section should provide a clear picture of the client for the reader. Discuss the following:

- Diagnosis and any coexisting conditions
- Relevant medical history
- Living situation and family/social supports
- Environments accessed such as preschool, school, respite
- Disability limitations to activity participation based on age and skill (specify communication).
- Levels of support required to complete tasks. Be specific about the level of support required and include examples.
- Any behaviours related to disability or communication skills
- Overview of previous intervention history including supports that have or haven't helped
- Person centred information such as what they enjoy doing, how they spend their time and who they are as a person.

You may wish to refer to the Participation Model/ ICF within this section.

2.2 PARTICIPANT GOALS

- Specify relevant goals from NDIS plan. For each relevant goal, specify how AT will help meet it.
- Specify Speech Pathology goals - remember to ensure that goals are functional and focus on participation and independence (visit <https://liberator.net.au/support/education/aac/goal-setting>). Assessments such as the Individually Prioritised Problem Assessment (IPPA) can be used to identify the need for AT.

2.3 FUNCTIONAL ASSESSMENT

- Specify functional limitations under the listed areas. Consider the following points under each area;
 - Physical; Consider access including fine motor skills (size of screen, requires a keyguard or touchguide), gross motor skills in relation to positioning.
 - Sensory; needs including vision and hearing.
 - Communication. Refer to Speech Pathology assessment findings including:
 - Observations
 - Specify receptive language, expressive language, pragmatics, speech etc. Clear and explicit data linking the clients' performance to their neurotypical peers can help the reader understand how impaired their communication skills are. This could be number of words understood, range of pragmatic functions they can communicate in a meaningful way, age equivalents. Information should include some of the below examples:
 - X's expressive communication is characterised by X. This negatively impacts on his/her ability to *communicate clearly/ get needs met/ build relationships/ ask for help etc.* It can help if you go through the range of functions of communication and how this is currently non-symbolic and cannot be recognised by people easily. If they are expressing their requests for help through behaviour, spell out the behaviour. E.g. when X wants help he throws/hits item, screams, hits self/others etc.

- X's receptive communication is characterised by X. This impacts on his/her ability to *follow instructions to participate in the class routine/ comprehend the routine resulting in behaviours such as* etc. Include comprehension of vocabulary, directions, questions, tone of voice, emotions.
- X has poor speech intelligibility characterised by X. This impacts X's ability to successfully communicate resulting in X.
 - Provide examples of how this impacts the individuals function and participation.
 - How does this individuals communication look without AT.
- Explicitly outline the impact of communication on social functioning and opportunities – help the reader see the impact of the client's communication difficulties on their independence and participation in their community
- Focus on FUNCTION- how do they communicate day to day, what are the barriers, what communicative functions does the participant currently use.
- Include reference to specific assessment tools used. For example, SETT assessment, AAC profile, Likert Rating Scales, Pragmatics Profile, etc. For more information about these assessments visit <https://liberator.net.au/support/education/aac/assessment-evaluation>.
- Communication skills in more than just one environmental setting
- Cognitive. Refer to any diagnoses and resulting categorisation such as mild, moderate, severe or profound.
- Behavioural. Consider any behaviours of concern from the participant that are related to communication breakdown. Provide the antecedent (trigger), resulting behaviour and perceived or actual consequences to the participant and those around them physically, emotionally and socially. Consider any potential risks to equipment. Explicitly state the behaviour, also if there was a change during the trial.

2.4 ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT

2.4.1 Past and present use of assistive technology

- Consider and list the use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication used by the participant in the past and present. This may include unaided approaches such as Key Word Sign, low technology supports such as a PODD book or the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), single message switches and high technology such as dynamic devices (dedicated/non-dedicated).
- Consider and list the use of assistive technology other than communication such as mobility aids, seating requirements, self-care equipment. Listing these will assist in building a picture of the participant's physical needs

2.4.2 Trial of potential Assistive Technology

- Do not assume that the person reading the report is a speech pathologist. **All** options considered or trialled must be specified, with a clear explanation of why there were not suitable. It can be beneficial to also discuss low technology options considered or trialled.
- If requesting eye gaze, discussion must be included around other access methods, such as: direct access assisted by a keyguard, switching, and head pointing. Demonstrate that these alternative approaches have at least been considered before having been discounted, or preferably that several have been trialled.

<p>Assistive technology trial</p>	<p>If a trial has been completed specify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Length of trial - Environments that the trial was completed in - Communication partners that utilised the option <p><i>The specifics of the trial of the preferred option can be discussed in Part 5B.</i></p> <p><i>If you have considered an option but not trialled it, explain why it was not trialled (especially for alternative access options).</i></p> <p>Describe the feature/ functions of the AT solution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specifically name the option of the system considered or trialled. • Specifically note the cost of the AT option
<p>Outcomes (why the AT solution was or wasn't suitable)</p>	<p>Explain why the AT solution is not recommended for options trialled or considered that were not suitable Refer to feature matching.</p> <p>If a trial has been completed specify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Length of trial - Environments that the trial was completed in - Communication partners that utilised the option <p><i>If you have considered an option but not trialled it, explain why it was not trialled (especially for alternative access options).</i></p> <p>Explain the evidence for the recommended option as the most suitable/ appropriate alternative which will facilitate achievement of the participant's goals, compared to others considered</p> <p>The specifics of the trial of the preferred option should be detailed here. Refer to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hardware <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Battery life ▪ Durability ▪ Speakers ▪ Dedicated or not dedicated ▪ Warranty ▪ Environmental Control Options ▪ Computer access & social media integration ○ Software <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Language representation (alphabet based, single meaning pictures, semantic compaction) ▪ Vocabulary file (LAMP WFL Full, Unity 144) ▪ Navigation (category/page based, sequences) ▪ Number of cells ○ Access <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Direct or indirect ▪ If indirect specify method ○ Participant's response <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Report participant engagement and motivation to use the trialled system

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ GAS (Goal Attainment Scaling) outcomes from trial – more info at https://liberator.net.au/support/education/aac/goal-setting ○ Goal's and outcomes. ○ Janice Light's Communicative Competencies in AAC (linguistic, operational, social and strategic) – can be discussed in the context of the AAC Profile. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Linguistic: discuss pragmatic functions used, improvements to expressive and receptive language E.g. “when using the LR7 X could make choices, request, answer yes/no questions and use some descriptive concepts. The device provided a communication strategy that allowed her/him success with both familiar and unfamiliar communication partners. The vocabulary builder option was active when X was using the devices. This meant that only targeted vocabulary was shown. This assisted him to learn the sequences for targeted words.” ○ Strategic: discuss navigation skills, level of support required, ability to make changes to the system/add words, E.g. “Strategic competence: X was able to navigate LAMP WFL to locate frequently used vocabulary such as food items, as well as motivating activities like games. He required direct verbal prompting and gesture to assist him to locate vocabulary used less frequently and to use more than one word phrases. X would pick up on cues from communication partners when she/he had chosen an incorrect icon and correct his error. For example: if X identified that a picture was the same and the Speech Pathologist said "no, it is different", she/he would independently clear the word 'same' from the speech display bar and complete the sequence for 'different' ○ Functional impact on participation and independence ○ IPPA (Individually Prioritised Problem Assessment) to indicate how AT made positive difference. ○ NDIS and speech pathology goals and how having access to the recommended AT meets them <p><i>More information about the assessments listed above is available at: https://liberator.net.au/support/education/aac/assessment-evaluation</i> Discuss any environmental supports (e.g. carers, teachers, aides)</p>
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2.4.3 / 2.4.4

Potential risks and functional impact for the participant/carer is this AT is not provided?

- Yes. Discuss potential risks for the participant without access to AT. For example; behavioural concerns, inability to successfully communicate and express needs/wants.

2.4.5

- Outline the participants current life stage and any upcoming changes such as starting school, finishing school, beginning a work placement.
- Ensure you are applying for a system with a robust vocabulary file and room for growth for support across their lifespan.

2.4.6

Does the AT allow for adaptation/accommodation of expected changes to the participant's circumstances, development of function?

- Discuss the robust vocabulary files accessible on the device and the room for growth as the participant's needs to skills change.
- Consider any foreseeable changes to the individuals' functional status such as development or deterioration of motor skills or sensory processes.

2.4.7

Frequency of use of the proposed technology

- Refer to the environments, times of day and activities that the device will be used in. For most participants this would be continuously throughout the day as it is their method of communication. Continuously, multiple times a day. Assistive technology for communication will be used across environments throughout the day as it is the individuals voice.

PART 3- RECOMMENDED ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

3.1

Description of AT solution

- Include all items and costs included on your Quote. This could include screen protector, carry strap, keyguard, bag, car charger etc.

3.2/3.21

Included mainstream items – if applicable

3.3

Implementing the AT solution

Service	Details	Hours	Cost
Setup assessor	Assessor to complete set up and training on how to use the device. This will include goal selection and how to use the device to support further communication development in various	Consider where and with who training will be required. Consider time required for goal setting and how to use the device to support further communication development.	No cost unless travel for set up is required

	environments including home, school, day program, respite etc.		
Setup supplier	Liberator provides 2 hours free of charge. This may include internet meetings, phone calls or face to face.	2	Quote based on the hourly rate.
Re-assessment	Briefly outline your plans for re-assessment. Consider if you will repeat the assessments completed for this application such as the AAC profile.	Consider time required for assessment and reporting	Quote based on the hourly rate.
Other	Ongoing therapeutic intervention over the next 12 months. Consider; face to face therapy, resource development, goal tracking, data analysis and travel. Also consider if the person is going to change schools or communication partners and if there will be further training in the device required.		Quote based on the hourly rate.

3.3.1

Describe who will coordinate support and warranty for the AT solution

Participant/informal supports	
Support coordinator, LAC, ECEI or equivalent	
AT assessor	The clinician writing the application
AT Supplier	If applying for a Liberator product; Liberator Pty Ltd provides 3 year parts and labour warranty for all devices including screen damage. Postage is included for all repairs to and from head office. Free support is also provided for device troubleshooting via a local consultant.

PART 4- SUMMARY OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT

4.1

Participants Goals and Aspirations

- Link back to their NDIS goals and how the trial of the recommended device has assisted them to work towards these goals. Include details about communication functions demonstrated e.g. emotions (happy), requests (food), protesting (stop), ownership (mine)

4.2

Social and Economic Participation

- Link back to how having a communication system will support participation in school/home/day program/community which can be linked to their NDIS goal.
- Provide information about how they participate in social activities with and without the AT

4.3

Offering value for Money

- Feature matching data can be used here to highlight that cheaper options e.g. iPad do not meet the features required for the participant e.g. can be used for other purposes → behaviour when told to turn off YouTube.
- Note down the features of the dedicated device that are required for the participant and how these are not available for hire, or on mainstream tools.
- If the participant has broken several tablets you could also note how frequently mainstream tools are broken by them.
- Note Liberator's 3 year parts and labour warranty.

4.4

Effective and Beneficial Support

- Support for the requested technology should be Strong. Consider existing research, your professional experience, the participant's experience with technology
 - o Research for people with severe communication impairment who are non-verbal require AAC. Speech Pathology Australia position statement on AAC.
 - o If your participant has a specific disability that has research on AAC + their disability e.g. AAC and Autism, then include relevant information on how AAC has been researched to support that population.

4.5

Reasonable Expectation of Care/other potential funding sources

- Discuss how the AT required is directly related to the participant's disability
- Device will be used across several environments home/school/work/community therefore other services involved will not fund device.

4.6

Other potential funding sources

- Note if any other funding sources could be used to purchase this AT. This will be 'no' for the majority of applications.

4.7

Participant feedback and notifications

4.7.1

- Participant and carer should be in agreeance with the AT application

4.7.2

- Ensure a copy of your report is provided to the participant/guardian.

4.7.3

- Liaise with participant/ carer to determine who should be notified when the AT is ready to be delivered

For more information about the NDIS AT funding process, please visit
<https://liberator.net.au/support/funding/ndis>