



# ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ESSENTIALS

## Part One

An introduction to Low Risk Assistive Technology  
for Commonwealth Home Support Programme Service Providers





iLA acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands, skies and waters throughout Australia and the Torres Strait where we live and work. We pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities across Australia, and their Elders past and present. We specifically acknowledge the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation, the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which our head office is located, in Boorloo/Perth, Western Australia (Noongar Boodja).



# Foreword



Assistive Technology Essentials showcases best available evidence and extensive practice knowledge in this innovative guide for consumers, families, practitioners and the home support sector who support them. This resource is a valuable knowledge translation tool in the rapidly evolving landscape of assistive technology. The Assistive Technology Essentials Guide, with the Making Choices Finding Solutions Guide draws together service delivery principles and contemporary products in uniquely Australian

contexts, empowering assistive technology users and informing all who support them to make informed decisions and to build capability around assistive technology solutions. Independent Living Assessment are to be congratulated on this addition to the evidence base.

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# About this guide

The overall aim of the Assistive Technology Essentials Guide is to build awareness and knowledge amongst Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) service providers and the broader aged care sector of the benefits of Assistive Technology (AT) and the role it plays as part of a wellness and reablement service delivery approach with improved outcomes for older people.

## What is Assistive Technology?

Assistive Technology (AT) is an umbrella term for assistive products and services.

- Assistive products are sometimes known as aids, equipment, durables, medical equipment, or appliances.
- AT services refers to 'human factors' such as assessment, advice and evaluation which help to match a person, their goals and their particular environments with specific products.

For the purpose of this guide, we have used the World Health Organisation (WHO) definition of AT: *'Assistive devices and technologies are those whose primary purpose is to maintain or improve an individual's functioning and independence to facilitate participation and to enhance overall well-being.'* (World Health Organization n.d.).<sup>1</sup>

The guide is divided into two sections:

## Part One

### An Introduction to Low Risk Assistive Technology

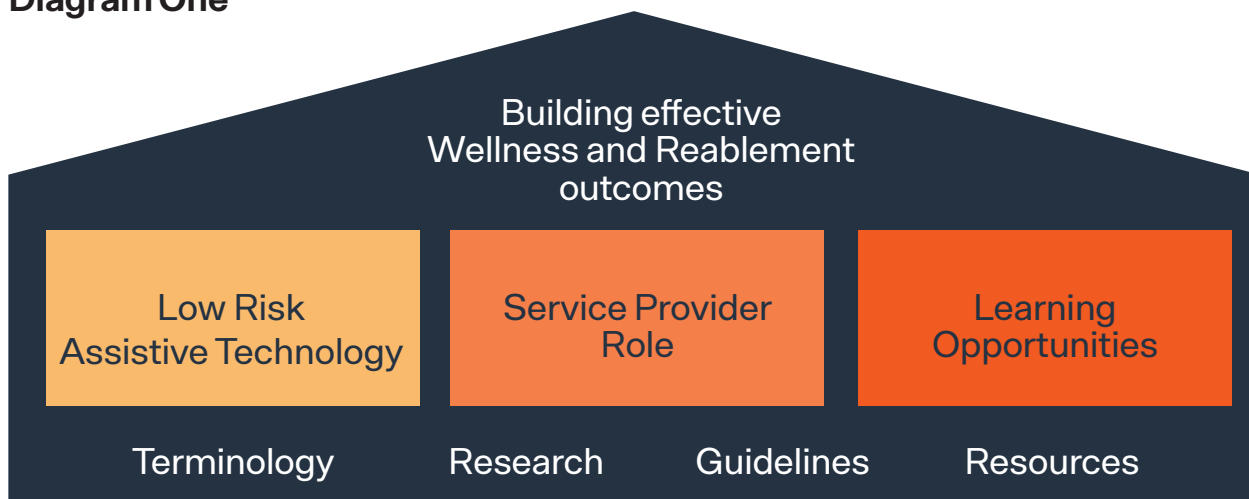
Part One has been designed to be used as a standalone guide. Whilst it steps out the different complexity levels of AT, it is mainly focused on supporting CHSP providers to see where and how low risk AT fits and their role in activating the use of these readily available products that do not require professional advice, setup, or training for effective use.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization n.d., Assistive devices and technologies, (<https://www.who.int/disabilities/technology/en/>).

<sup>2</sup> Therapeutic Goods Administration 2020, TGA Draft Determination

Part One, as described in Diagram One, provides practical information, good to know facts, advice and tips, spotlights on relevant CHSP guidelines, and some research highlights.

## Diagram One



It is recommended that Part One is used in conjunction with some of the resources detailed on page 26, namely:

- The Making Choices, Finding Solutions Guide
- KeepAble Assistive Technology Tip Sheets for Support Workers and
- The National Equipment Database (NED)

## Part Two Assistive Technology Solutions

Part Two, whilst not exhaustive, provides comprehensive details on low through to high risk Assistive Technology products that are available to support older people with everyday activities. Products are broken down into sections with each section containing a descriptor of the product, considerations, when to use, when not to use and fitting instructions.

## What has informed the content of the Guide?

The following pillars have informed the content:

1. **Best practice** relating to the interface of wellness, reablement and assistive technology.
2. **Practice-based knowledge and experience** sourced from Independent Living Assessment (iLA) staff who have delivered assessment, allied health services and sector support services for over 40 years.
3. **Learnings** from people we provide services to and the aged care sector.





# About us

Connecting you to knowledge and tools that enable and enhance living and ageing well in the community

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iLA (Independent Living Assessment) was established in January 2020 by Indigo Australasia (formerly Independent Living Centre WA).

The focus of iLA is to support people through assessment, navigation and sector capacity building initiatives.

Some services previously provided by the Independent Living Centre WA are now provided by iLA, including CHSP funded Sector Support and Development, Regional Assessment Services (RAS), AT Chat and Grants.

Our services support people with disability, older people, carers, health professionals and the aged care sector.

## Acknowledgements

Funding for this guide has been provided by the Australian Government, Department of Health and through Indigo Australasia Incorporated. It is part of a series of initiatives developed by the iLA Sector Support and Development team. Although funding for this guide has been provided by the Australian Government, the material contained therein does not necessarily represent the views or policies of the Australian Government.

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## Introduction

### Assistive Technology and aged care

Whilst low risk assistive technology is just one aspect of CHSP service provision, the use of such can make a fundamental difference in a person's capacity to manage everyday activities independently, safely and confidently.



Australia's population is ageing with older Australians a growing proportion of the total population. In 2017, 15% of Australians (3.8 million) were 65 and over and by 2027 that is expected to increase to 18% or 5,180,096 people, which will continue to increase demand on government services. A 2018 Australian Bureau of Statistics report stated over half of all Australians' living with disability (53.1% or 2.3 million) used aids and equipment because of their condition.<sup>3</sup>

A key aspect of the aged care reforms occurring in Australia over the past decade, is to promote older Australians' independence, autonomy and quality of life.<sup>4</sup> In line with these reforms, the Australian Government Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) has mandated a policy position that states:

*All CHSP service providers are required to work with frail older people to maximise their independence and enable them to remain living safely in their own homes and communities.*

*Providers must structure services with a focus on client strengths and goals to support independence and generally not undertake tasks that the client is capable of doing safely for themselves.*

*This approach to service delivery known as wellness and reablement builds on people's strengths and goals to promote greater*

*independence, autonomy, participation in everyday activities, builds confidence, improves social connectedness and well-being and helps people stay active and engaged.*<sup>5</sup>

Assistive Technology (AT), also commonly known as aids and equipment has an important role to play in supporting older people to improve and maintain their independence and continue to be able to do everyday activities.

When combined with wellness and reablement approaches and interventions (such as strength and balance programs, task simplification and practice, energy conservation and confidence building), assistive technology can make a significant contribution to supporting an individual's desire to be as independent as possible. In particular AT can help a person to compensate for or adapt to some difficulty or enable someone to regain confidence and capacity to resume activities.

<sup>3</sup> Australian bureau of statistics 2018. 4430.0 Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings. Canberra, Australia.

<sup>4</sup> Australian Government Department of Health 2018b, Ageing and aged care <<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/corporate-plan-2018-2019/our-performance/ageing-and-aged-care>>.

<sup>5</sup> The Commonwealth Home Support Programme – Program Manual 2020-2022



# What is Assistive Technology?

Assistive Technology (AT) is an umbrella term for assistive products and services.

- Assistive products are sometimes known as aids, devices, equipment, durables, medical equipment, or appliances.
- AT services refers to 'human factors' such as assessment, advice and evaluation which help to match a person, their goals and their particular environments with specific products.

For the purpose of this guide, we have used the World Health Organisation (WHO) definition of AT: *'Assistive devices and technologies are those whose primary purpose is to maintain or improve an individual's functioning and independence to facilitate participation and to enhance overall well-being.'* (World Health Organization n.d.).<sup>6</sup>

AT can be categorised in many ways. Understanding the complexity of AT is essential as it informs what skills, knowledge and qualifications are required to support the governance structure around AT prescription and provision. Importantly by raising awareness it will also maximise opportunities for the persons needs to be met from a reablement and wellness perspective.

For this guide and within an aged care setting, we have used the categories of **low risk AT**, **under advice AT** and **prescribed AT** to reflect levels of complexity. These codes are informed by classifications used by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), by the National Disability Insurance Agency, and the Department of Health.

For ease of recognition, we have applied a 'traffic light' (Green, Amber and Red) colour code to the list of assistive technology/equipment indicating whether the product is simple, more complex or whether there is any risk involved in safe use.

The table below provides easy reference to the traffic light system<sup>7</sup> and is stepped out further here.

**Green means low risk AT products.** These are simple and relatively low-cost daily living aids such as a long-handled duster, jar and can openers, long handled shower brushes, sock aids, lightweight mops and vacuum cleaners, long handled dustpan and brushes and gardening items such as kneelers.

Low risk AT is usually available 'off the shelf', can be purchased at a wider range of retail and online suppliers. Low risk AT is defined as having a low potential for causing harm when used for activities in daily living environments and do not require professional advice, setup or training for effective use.<sup>8</sup>

**Amber means AT products best used 'under advice'.** These products are generally available, but the person requiring the product/s would benefit from written or professional advice to select and to ensure the products/s are used or installed correctly. Having appropriate information and advice can also reduce the chance of the product/s not being used. For the purpose of this guide these products have been coded amber to signal caution. Examples include toilet frames, shower chairs, kitchen stools and personal alarms.

**Red means specialised or complex AT products that need to be prescribed.** These high-risk products are usually more complex and more costly. They require a clinical assessment to ensure appropriate prescription and for the product/s to be adjusted or configured precisely to meet individual support needs. These products may have potential to cause the user or others harm due to their features and are coded red to signal high alert for professional services. Examples include bed rails, scooters, patient hoists and adjustable beds.

<sup>6</sup> World Health Organization n.d., Assistive devices and technologies, <<https://www.who.int/disabilities/technology/en/>>

<sup>7</sup> iLA have applied classifications used by the Therapeutic Goods Administration, by the National Disability Insurance Agency, and the Department of Health to develop a coded system that indicates whether the equipment is complex or there is any risk involved in safe use. The NDIS Assistive Technology Operational Guidelines AT Product Risk Table November 2020 has also been considered.

<sup>8</sup> Therapeutic Goods Administration 2020, TGA Draft Determination.



**Green**

**LOW RISK AT**

Jar openers, long handled shower sponges, long handled dustpan and brush, sock aids, large print calendar



**Amber**

**UNDER ADVICE AT**

Toilet frames, shower chairs, kitchen stools, magnifiers, personal alarms



**Red**

**PRESCRIBED AT**

Bed transfer rails, walking frames, scooters



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# How can Assistive Technology help?

As people age, they may experience some difficulties with everyday activities. For example, reduced flexibility, strength and dexterity will put people at greater risk of falls. Conditions such as arthritis, or those leading to vision or memory loss, may impact on functional ability and mobility.

Everyday tasks, such as opening a jar or tin of food, drying feet, putting on socks or stockings, or performing cleaning tasks may become increasingly challenging and this can be a catalyst for needing support from the aged care system or increasing levels of support.

AT can (and even more so if combined with wellness and reablement strategies) help older people maintain independence and stay in their homes as long as they wish to do so.

Research suggests that the 'ability to do things for myself' is important in how satisfied older people are with their lives, so being aware of and having access to equipment and assistive technology can support this desire. Older people are more likely to use equipment and assistive technology where the items are straight forward, easy to use, work properly and meet a need. In particular AT needs to align with a person's sense of identity and self-image.

Assistive Technology can have multiple and far-reaching benefits. Some of these benefits are described below:

- Maintaining or improving a person's functional capabilities — this includes everyday tasks such as dressing, showering and household cleaning.
- Improving confidence and wellbeing by enabling an individual to manage more daily activities as independently as they can.
- Improved safety around the home, particularly in relation to falls risk.
- Reduced rate of functional decline and slowing the impact of age-related disability.
- Supports a sense of self dignity.
- Encourages people to complete tasks in between the days of service delivery.
- Enhanced accessibility which in turn improves access to the broader community and participation in outdoor activities.
- Can support and motivate service providers to maintain and enhance a person independence.
- Reducing stress on family carers and paid formal care by making it easier and safer to provide assistance (supports Occupational Health and Safety)
- May reduce or refocus tasks where support is required.
- May reduce pain when completing daily activities.
- Can help reduce fatigue, so the person has more energy to do other activities.
- Provides a positive overall impact on an individual's health and wellbeing.
- May reduce or even eliminate the need for home care services, reduce the need for care later on in the person's journey and likelihood of entering residential care by facilitating self-care practices.



“The tasks that some older people may struggle with include getting into and out of the bath/shower, using stairs and preparing food, including opening packaging and containers. But these shouldn’t be reasons for people to rely on help at home or have to consider moving.”

## Did you know?

- “At least half of all age-related changes to muscles, bones and joints are caused by disuse. Studies of centenarians (people over 100) show that social and mental activity is critical for health and longevity. This includes engaging in intellectual stimulation, learning new things, having good family ties, a supportive social network and community links.”<sup>9</sup>
- “The Australian Department of Health has identified strong evidence that assistive technology (AT) can enable improved safety and reduced falls; reduced hospitalisation; improved independence, mobility and physical function; improved well-being and quality of life, including an enhanced sense of safety and increased opportunities to continue living at home.”<sup>10</sup>
- Globally, assistive technology is noted to be ‘indispensable to helping older people remain healthy, active and independent for as long as possible’.<sup>11</sup>
- “In 2018, the Assistive Technology for Older Australians Research Report<sup>12</sup> found firm evidence that AT delivers independence, autonomy, safety and participation for consumers and has the potential to address Australia’s changing demographics and deliver positive health and wellbeing outcomes to older Australians. This evidence is being used to argue for appropriate funding and access to assistive technology.”<sup>13</sup>
- In 2020, the Department of Health commissioned a review of AT programs for older Australians and identified a range of positive health outcomes and economic outcomes for older Australians who use or need AT and home modifications. This report also describes common combinations of AT used by CHSP recipients and identifies the type and cost of human factors needed to provide AT.<sup>14</sup>



<sup>9</sup> Better Health Victoria. (2012, November). Ageing Muscles Bones and Joints. Retrieved from Better Health Victoria: <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/ageing-muscles-bones-and-joints>

<sup>10</sup> Connell, J., Greal, C., Olver, K., & Power, J. (2008). Comprehensive scoping study on the use of assistive technology by frail older people living in the community. Retrieved from Canberra:

<sup>11</sup> WHO. (2015). WHO Global Disability Action Plan 2014-2021. Retrieved from Geneva: <https://www.who.int/disabilities/actionplan/en/>

<sup>12</sup> Layton, N., & Irlam, C. (2018). Assistive Technology for Older Australians: Rapid Evidence Review and Economic Pathway Analysis. Retrieved from Canberra: <https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2018/06/apo-nid182236-1213376.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> National Aged Care Alliance. Position Paper Assistive Technology for Older Australians. June 2018

<sup>14</sup> Australian Healthcare Associates June 2020. Review of Assistive Technology Programs in Australia: Final Report and Supplementary Technical Report for the Australian Government Department of Health. Canberra: Department of Health.

# | How can service providers actively support the use of low risk AT?

Wellness and Reablement in action means supporting someone to find resourceful ways to adapt to and improve upon their current level of ability. This might mean working with someone to break down an activity into smaller more manageable steps or using techniques to support that person to conserve energy, so they don't fatigue so easily. These strategies should be considered and tried before introducing low risk assistive technology as a solution.

The person for example may not have considered simple techniques such as:

<b>changing the way they do an activity to make it easier.</b>	<b>planning their day so they alternate heavy with light activities.</b>
<b>learning to pace themselves by resting between activities rather than tackling all at once.</b>	<b>using proper breathing during an activity and using the strongest muscle groups to complete an activity with less effort.</b>

These strategies and using simple items, such as shoe horns, jar openers, long handled shower brushes, dressing aids, and long handled household items, can make a real difference.

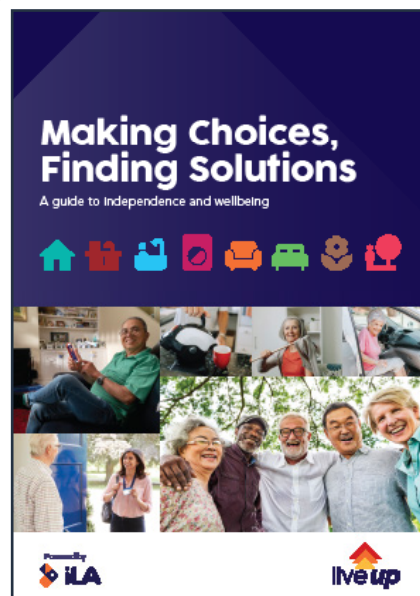
Staff and organisations may also be unaware of the sort of assistive technology available through retail outlets such as pharmacies or online that might support their clients.

**“Many older people just need ideas and advice about the simple equipment that exists to help them with daily tasks and to lead full, active and safe lives”.**



Service providers and frontline staff can facilitate the use of low risk Assistive Technology in a range of ways. These include:

- building staff knowledge and confidence to support clients with simple AT.
- providing information and knowing what resources are available. Two resources that have been developed specifically to support older people and community care support workers in the use of low risk assistive technology are:
  - The consumer focused - Making Choices Finding Solutions (MCFS) Guide. This guide can be downloaded via [ilaustralia.org.au/solution-finder](http://ilaustralia.org.au/solution-finder)
  - A support worker guide to Assistive Technology and Equipment available through KeepAble. [Assistive technology and equipment: A support worker's guide | KeepAble](#)
- observing and discussing activities that a person may find difficult.
  - this could include carrying shopping, vacuuming, getting dressed, opening jars, showering, cooking, feeding pets, turning taps or managing medications.
- identifying activities for which low risk AT may be helpful and discussing the idea with the person and if required the service coordinator and RAS assessor.
- demonstrating the correct use of low risk assistive technology (the tip sheets in the support workers guide to assistive technology and equipment will help here.)
- actively support and monitor the use of assistive technology prompting, encouraging, motivating and monitoring the use of assistive technology as part of a goal orientated support plan.
- referring to an assessment service and/or Allied Health Professional for review and possible provision of AT through a CHSP Goods, Equipment and Assistive Technology Service (GEAT) or other funding source.





## What are examples of low risk AT?

### Low risk product examples (Green)



There are numerous low risk products that can be used to support a reablement approach and need no or minimal assistance to set up and use. For quick access we have put some of these products in a table below accompanied by some images.

Many more examples are also provided throughout the **Making Choices Finding Solutions** guide.

Activity	Solution
<p>Bathroom and personal care (e.g. dressing, showering)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Long handled sponge</li> <li>Long handled toe washer and drier</li> <li>Long handled sponge</li> <li>Shoehorn</li> <li>Nonslip mat</li> <li>Long handled shoehorn</li> <li>Sock or stocking aid</li> <li>Easy reach lotion applicator</li> <li>Button hook</li> <li>Zip puller</li> <li>Dressing stick</li> <li>Long handled scissors</li> <li>Nail clippers</li> <li>Medication dispensers</li> </ul>
<p>Kitchen and meal preparation</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jar, bottle and can opener</li> <li>Tap turner</li> <li>Kettle tilt</li> <li>Light weight single kettle</li> <li>Large grip cutlery</li> <li>Crockery with no spill lips</li> <li>Non slip mats</li> <li>Shopping bag carriers</li> <li>Kitchen/oven timer</li> <li>Safety/cut off switch</li> <li>Stove knob covers</li> <li>Buttering boards</li> </ul>





Activity	Solution
<p data-bbox="336 757 778 790">Domestic and household tasks</p> 	<p data-bbox="847 757 1331 831">Lightweight/long handled brooms, brushes dustpan and brush</p> <p data-bbox="847 842 1362 875">Lightweight vacuum/carpet sweeper</p> <p data-bbox="847 887 1310 920">Long handled extendable duster</p> <p data-bbox="847 931 1286 1005">Shower and bath long handled cleaners</p> <p data-bbox="847 1016 1251 1050">Lightweight mop and bucket</p> <p data-bbox="847 1061 1118 1095">Skirting board mop</p> <p data-bbox="847 1106 1059 1140">Laundry trolley</p> <p data-bbox="847 1151 1059 1184">Easy grip pegs</p> <p data-bbox="847 1196 1027 1229">Drying racks</p>
<p data-bbox="336 1355 699 1429">Recreational and general household items</p> 	<p data-bbox="847 1355 1378 1388">Long handled reachers/pick up sticks</p> <p data-bbox="847 1400 1171 1433">Seat belt easy reacher</p> <p data-bbox="847 1444 1054 1478">Car handy bar</p> <p data-bbox="847 1489 1118 1523">Car swivel cushion</p> <p data-bbox="847 1534 1023 1568">Book reader</p> <p data-bbox="847 1579 995 1612">Magnifiers</p> <p data-bbox="847 1624 995 1657">Key turner</p> <p data-bbox="847 1668 995 1702">Tap turner</p> <p data-bbox="847 1713 1177 1747">Large button telephone</p> <p data-bbox="847 1758 1098 1792">Doorknob turners</p> <p data-bbox="847 1803 1337 1877">Long handled/easy grip gardening tools</p>

# What are the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) guidelines for Assistive Technology provision?

The Commonwealth Home Support Programme uses the term Goods, Equipment and Assistive Technology (GEAT) to refer to assistive technology provided to assist an older person to cope with a functional limitation and enable them to perform everyday activities they would otherwise be unable to do and promote their safety and independence.

Assistive Technology is often integral to a short term or time limited reablement intervention as it enables a person to adapt to changed circumstances with the aim of getting the person “back on their feet” and able to resume previous activities without the need for on-going service delivery, or with a reduced need for services.<sup>15</sup>

The 2020 – 2022 CHSP Manual describes the objectives and description of the GEAT service as:

*“To provide access to goods, equipment or assistive technology which enables the client to perform tasks they would otherwise be unable to do or promote the older person’s safety and independence including time limited services to support wellness and reablement goals.*

*“Goods, equipment and assistive technology are provided to assist a client to cope with a functional limitation and maintain their independence. Items include those that provide short-term and ongoing support and assist with mobility, communication, reading and personal care. These can be provided through loan or purchase.”*

## Encouraging the use of assistive technology is aligned with the principles of the CHSP as it enhances the independence of clients accessing support.

The CHSP manual states that older people may need a range of items, from smaller inexpensive 'off the shelf' items to customised equipment and technology which requires assessment and prescription by professionals with specialised skills and knowledge.

Goods, equipment and assistive technologies that can be purchased under the CHSP fall under the following service sub-types:

- car modifications
- communication aids
- medical care aids
- other goods and equipment
- personal monitoring
- reading aids
- self-care aids
- support and mobility aids (including contributing towards the cost of mobility scooters and vehicle modifications)

and include a wide range of items such as:

- adapted utensils
- assistive technologies such as robotic vacuum cleaners
- dressing aids
- low vision aids such as electronic magnifiers and magnifying/reading software.
- over-toilet frames
- sensor mats
- shower chairs
  
- walking frames

In general it is expected that clients who are unable to purchase the item/s independently will be able to access up to \$1,000 in total support per financial year under this service type.

Where a GEAT provider determines it is necessary, a client may be referred to an occupational therapist for an assessment for customised GEAT or for support using a GEAT. CHSP GEAT providers may also use grant funds to purchase an occupational therapy assessment for their client's. A GEAT service provider can also provide training or support to the client using the item and maintaining or repairing the item.

Please note, to access a CHSP GEAT service a referral must be submitted by a Regional Assessment or Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT) through My Aged Care.

Referrals and requests for funding from GEAT may be considered on a case by case basis.



<sup>15</sup> Department of Health. *Commonwealth Home Support Programme Program Manual 2020-2022*.

## Test your thinking

### A checklist for CHSP providers

Staff working with a person in their own home have a key role in supporting access to low risk products that can support wellness and reablement. They can do this by:<sup>16</sup>

#### **Observing and discussing daily activities that a person may find difficult and assisting them to identify their needs**



Working together using the Making Choices Finding Solutions (MCFS) guide to complete the “Every Day Activities Checklist” in section 8 to assist the person identify their needs and possible solutions. [Link here.](#)

#### **Sharing resources with the person to assist them to know how to access AT and know what is available**



Show the MCFS guide (as above) to the person and advise them of the online National Equipment Database (NED). Talk to families where needed about the guide. Assist with accessing purchase of AT where possible. [Search NED database here.](#)

#### **Encouraging and facilitating the use of low risk AT**



*There are many examples in the MCFS guide for consumers. Provide a copy of the guide to the person and their family.*

#### **Providing the person with prompts, encouragement, motivate and monitor the use of AT**



If you are supporting someone who is also receiving a CHSP Allied Health Service and or CHSP Goods, Equipment and Assistive Technology Service, understand what is provided in the recommendations and your role as part of that support. For example, some equipment may have been supplied by the GEAT service to support the person you are showering.

Providing feedback to your coordinator/supervisor when equipment is not being used, why and its impact.

#### **Providing feedback and reporting progress including sharing learnings through individual stories/case studies**



Use stories/case studies as described in the AT in Action section below for learning opportunities, reinforce and encourage staff to be mindful of **making every opportunity matter** to ensure that staff understand how “to do with rather than for”.

#### **Understanding when and how a person can be referred to a CHSP Goods, Equipment and Assistive Technology service**



Under CHSP RAS and ACAT are the gatekeepers to assistive technology and are responsible for determining whether a referral is made to a Goods, Equipment, and Assistive Technology Provider (GEAT) through My Aged Care. Front line staff should discuss with their coordinator/supervisor and where deemed appropriate a referral should be triggered for a support plan review by the service provider.



### **Understanding when a person might need written or technical advice to select some assistive technology and to ensure that the product is used and installed correctly**



The type of 'under advice' assistive technology that fits in this category is detailed in Part Two of this Assistive Technology Essentials Guide. 'Under advice' AT is colour coded amber to signal caution and includes products such as toilet frames and shower chairs.

### **Understanding the levels of assistive technology complexity, associated risks and when there is a need for AT to be prescribed by an allied health professional**



The type of assistive technology that needs to be prescribed by an allied health professional (such as an Occupational Therapist, Physiotherapist or Speech Pathologist) is detailed in Part Two of the AT Essentials Guide. Prescribed AT is colour coded Red.

Referrals to CHSP allied health professionals are determined by RAS and/or ACAT staff and a referral made through My Aged Care. Front line staff should discuss further with their coordinator/supervisor and where deemed appropriate a referral should be triggered for a support plan review by the service provider.

<sup>16</sup> Adapted from Municipal of Victoria (2014) Enabling the use of easy living equipment in everyday activities A Guide for Home and Community Care services in Victoria





# AT in action

The following pages show a couple of case studies for low risk AT solutions that could be discussed at staff meetings as a learning opportunity for CHSP support staff.

## Case Study – Merv

Merv is an 85 year old man. He describes pain and reduced mobility as the biggest limitation to everyday life. He lives alone and has one son who is a FIFO worker so is not available to assist regularly. His past medical history includes Paget's disease of bone, Osteoarthritis, Atrial Fibrillation, recurrent kidney stones and hearing loss. His energy levels are low due to pain and medications.

Merv currently receives support to do some of his housework and laundry.

### Case study - Merv Activity

**Merv has advised his support worker that he is experiencing increasing difficulty with washing and dressing his lower half including getting pants, socks and shoes on.**

### Solution Approach

The support worker discussed the Making Choices Finding Solutions guide with Merv by looking at the tasks he is having increasing difficulty with and helping him understand how he can change the way he is doing them and what AT solutions might be helpful and where to purchase them. She left a copy of the guide with him so that he could further explore options and show his son.

## Solution

### Lower half washing -

- Purchase a long-handled sponge or brush for washing feet.
- Purchase a long-handled toe washer/dryer to dry feet.
- Move a footstool into the bathroom for easier reach.

### Putting socks on/off -

- Purchase a sock aid.

### Lower half dressing -

- Purchase a long-handled reacher (helping hand).
- Purchase a long-handled toe washer/ dryer to dry feet.
- Move a footstool into the bathroom for easier reach.

## Case study - Merv **Discussion points**

- Follow up to determine if Merv needs assistance purchasing items either help to go shopping or making a decision about where to go and deciding what to purchase, including on-line shopping.
- Show Merv how to access solutions through the online National Equipment Database.
- Once the product has been purchased assist Merv to use effectively e.g. provide a demonstration of how to use the products and ensure he is able to show an understanding of use.
- Demonstrate and practice with him the use of the sock aid in particular.
- View and download the support worker low risk assistive technology tip sheets on [KeepAble.com.au](http://KeepAble.com.au) to help you work with Merv.  
Support worker help sheet '[Maximising independence in the bathroom](#)' (PDF)  
Support worker help sheet '[Maximising independence with dressing](#)' (PDF)
- Schedule follow up reviews on progress with how the solutions are working to assist him with the tasks and determine if he requires any additional demonstration, practice or alternatives.
- Review with service coordinator progress on whether the strategies used have been successful and if not discuss options with regards to a referral for CHSP Allied Health and/or Goods, Equipment and Assistive Technology (GEAT) service.

“Using small pieces of equipment has made all the difference. It not only makes things easier, it makes things possible”.

## Case Study - Violet

Violet has arthritis with pain in her hands and hips. She is waiting for a total hip replacement. She limps as she walks and is unable to stand for extended periods of time.

She has one daughter. Violet lives alone in her daughter's rental property. She attends a Hydrotherapy Pool and Pilates. Currently Violet is a choir member and continues to do project work as an English Teacher.

Violet has discussed with her support worker (who currently assists with shopping, washing and changing her bedlinen) her increasing difficulty with the following:



### Case study - Violet Activity

**She is currently having problems moving furniture to vacuum under it as well as dusting lower surfaces.**

**In the bathroom she has difficulty scrubbing the shower recess floor.**

**She has problems standing for periods of time to prepare fresh meals in the kitchen at her benchtop and stove.**

**Violet also finds it difficult to reach kitchen utensils in cupboards, open jars, turn taps and lift heavy objects.**

## Solution Approach

The support worker explored options using the Making Choices Finding Solutions (MCFS) guide with Violet by looking at the tasks Violet is having increasing difficulty with and understanding how she can change the way she is doing them and what AT solutions might be helpful and where to purchase them. The support worker also showed Violet the National Equipment Database as a way of finding more options. She left a copy of the MCFS guide with her so that she could further discuss with her daughter.



## Solution

**Vacuuming under furniture** – Violet can use a lightweight vacuum however she is unable to lift or move heavy furniture. Private options for a monthly deep clean that could assist with this were discussed and Violet decided to follow up with her daughter to organise.

**Cleaning the shower recess** – Purchase a long-handled shower scrubber.

## Standing/meal preparation

- Leave her slow cooker and toaster on the kitchen bench so she does not have to lift them to use.
- Purchase a kettle tipper for her existing kettle.
- Purchase a universal tap turner for the kitchen taps which can also be used for other taps in the house if needed.
- Purchase a sharp knife with a built-up handle, that is easier to grip.
- Explore options and purchase a jar and tin opener.
- Violet decided to explore installing a corner pull out cabinet in her kitchen cupboard to improve access to her saucepans.
- Sitting at dining table to chop and prepare food.

## Case study - Violet **Discussion points**

- Following up to see if Violet needs assistance purchasing items planning and scheduling this through her shopping assistance support.
- If Violet uses online shopping provide assistance to carry this out if needed by exploring product information provided in the Making Choices Finding Solutions guide or NED.
- Once the product has been purchased assist Violet to install it and ask her to demonstrate how she will use it and provide guidance where needed if she needs practice to learn a new approach.
- View and download the support worker low risk assistive technology tip sheets to help you work with Violet, such as the Maximising Independence with Meal Preparation Tip sheet downloadable from [KeepAble.com.au](http://KeepAble.com.au) Support worker help sheets PDF ([keepable.com.au](http://keepable.com.au))
- Schedule follow up reviews on progress with how the solutions are working to assist her with the tasks and determine if she requires any additional demonstration, practice or alternatives.
- Check whether she has had feedback from her daughter on the carpet cleaning service as well as the Making Choices Finding Solutions guide.
- Review with service coordinator progress on whether the strategies used have been successful and if not discuss options with regards to a referral for CHSP Allied Health and/or Goods, Equipment and Assistive Technology (GEAT) service.

# Appendix One – Recommended resources and sites

## 1. Making Choices, Finding Solutions Guide

The Making Choices Finding Solutions guide is designed to inform and provide advice to older people and guide assistive technology (AT) decisions. Regardless of the complexity of the AT solution, older people as 'experts' with lived experience of daily life can be empowered to think through the process of making choices and finding solutions.

MCFSGuides individuals through a process of identifying needs and learning about potential solutions and how to access them. They are guided through a range of solutions, including assistive technology, energy conservation, work simplification, and the role of the allied health practitioner.

An Every Day Activities Checklist is provided to help individuals identify their common frustrations which is linked to a solutions sections for some simple advice and buying guides.

[www.ilaustralia.org.au](http://www.ilaustralia.org.au)

## 2. KeepAble

KeepAble is an online resource which offers support, resources and information around Wellness and Reablement service delivery in the home care sector. Compiled by a team of dedicated professionals, this online collaborative hub has been developed to assist home support providers to work with and empower older people to improve their independence and live life well for longer.

Along with information and resources relating to wellness and reablement, KeepAble contains fact sheets about low risk AT that can be downloaded and used by organisations and support staff. The site also covers information on reablement strategies that can be used before assistive technology is considered or in conjunction with assistive technology.

[keepable.com.au](http://keepable.com.au)

## 3. National Equipment Database (NED)

NED is the largest online database of information about assistive technology products and suppliers in Australia and is designed to provide impartial and up to date information on more than 15,000 assistive technology and equipment options across Australia. NED also contains supplier information, current pricing and item availability.

There are products available that can assist people to better manage daily tasks, learn, work, socialize, communicate, be mobile and participate in recreational activities.

[www.askned.com.au](http://www.askned.com.au)

## 4. Indigo – Assistive Technology information sheets

Indigo (formerly Independent Living Centre of WA) has a number of information sheets that are based on common enquiries about assistive technology for the home. Indigo is based in Western Australia.

[Around the home](#)

## 5. LifeTecAustralia Assistive Technology fact sheets

LifeTec Australia have a number of fact sheets developed to provide tips and to support people to increase their knowledge on assistive technology equipment. LifeTec is based in Queensland.

[Fact Sheets | Expert Assistive Technology Services | LifeTec](#)

## 6. Assistive Technology Australia

Assistive Technology Australia (previously, Independent Living Centre NSW) is a leading information, education, and advisory centre for Assistive technology and the built environment. They are located in Westpoint Blacktown, NSW Australia and provide impartial advice, information and leadership that builds capacity and optimises the value of assistive technology in leading a life of choice.

[Assistive Technology | Assistive Technology Australia | ILC NSW](#)

## 7. Independent Living Centre Tasmania (ILCT)

Independent Living Centre Tasmania provides unbiased information and advice to the Tasmanian community regarding assistive technology. In 2020, ILC (Tas) Inc. opened a permanent office and showrooms in Hobart and Ulverstone, able to demonstrate the potential of the latest in assistive technology to the whole Tasmanian community.

[ILCT | Information sheets](#)

## 8. CHSP Goods Equipment and Assistive Technology (GEAT)

CHSP funded Goods, Equipment and Assistive Technology (GEAT) Services provide access to goods, equipment and assistive technology which enables older people to perform tasks they would otherwise be unable to do or promote an older person's safety and independence including time limited services to support wellness and reablement goals.

GEAT is accessed like other CHSP services, through My Aged Care and further to an assessment by RAS or ACAT. More detailed information on what a GEAT service is funded for, can be found on pg 30 of the CHSP manual.

[www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)

## 9. GEAT2Go

GEAT2Go is a recent Australian Government initiative under CHSP. It allows older people across Australia to access helpful devices and equipment to continue living independently and make daily tasks easier. This new service was launched in August 2021 and is available in all Aged Care Planning regions on an "as needs" basis and should be used when no other GEAT provider is available. Indigo Australasia provide the National GEAT2Go service and operate alongside current CHSP GEAT providers and under the same requirements for CHSP services. The National phone line for GEAT2Go is 1800 518 218. For more information click the link below.

[geat2go](http://geat2go)

## 10. ARATA

The Australian Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology Association (ARATA) is the peak body for AT, and welcomes AT users, providers, assessors, innovators and other AT stakeholders as members.

[www.arata.org.au](http://www.arata.org.au)

Should funding options outside of CHSP be required then the funding map developed by ARATA may be helpful as it lists over 50 sources of assistive technology funding in Australia.

Funders may cover certain states and territories, may be designed for specific disability types, and may be limited to certain age groups (for example over 65s or children), certain participations

(such as education or vocational access) or certain eligibility criteria (such as compensation or veterans funding).

Visit the ARATA AT Funding Map to see an updated list.

[www.arata.org.au/access-&-funding/funding-your-at/](http://www.arata.org.au/access-&-funding/funding-your-at/)

## Disclaimer

The content in this guide is provided on an "as is" and "as available" basis and designed as an information source only.

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## Assistive Technology Essentials Part 2

[assistive-technology-essentials-part2/](http://assistive-technology-essentials-part2/)

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