

The NDIS and Assistive Technology

- Our Experience So Far

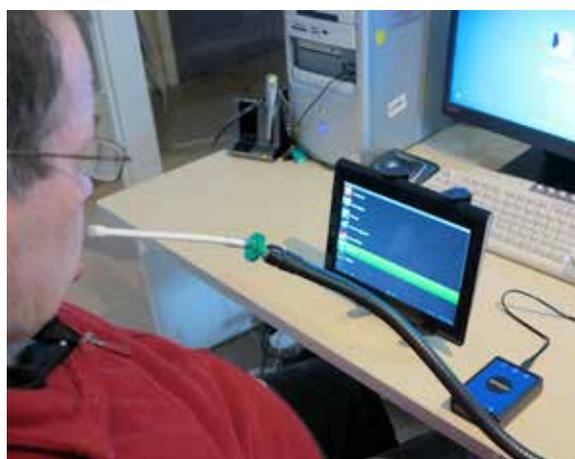
Ability has been active in the Hunter NDIS pilot program since its inception in 2013. Like many in our sector, we share high expectations for the NDIS and our experience so far has not diminished our overall optimism for the scheme. But there are issues that we have confronted that are worth sharing with you.

Assistive technology is, for the most part, a specialised area. Yet the NDIS seems to depend considerably on the planners, and it is our experience that their knowledge of computer access and environmental control technology is minimal. This can be frustrating at times ("what is a head switch?") and can play havoc with our proposals for clients. Often we need to provide lengthy telephone support (unpaid) to overcome this lack of knowledge. The pivotal role of the planners makes their ignorance on these matters highly conspicuous. There is an obvious and somewhat urgent need for training for planners in this area, if not others as well.

The second area of difficulty we have faced is more to do with administration. Repeatedly our recommendations are not coded properly at the approval stage, and this means our requests for payment are then rejected. Trying to untangle these problems has wasted many hours in phone calls and emails, with our payments being delayed for months. Again, I'm sure that these are teething problems that will be ironed out in due course.

But the good news is that the NDIS is giving people access to beneficial technology. These are people who would not have otherwise had the opportunity to access such benefits. It will get better, we are sure.

National
disabilityinsurance
Scheme



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and LOTS MORE!

HOT NEWS!

Loan pools for certain items of assistive technology are now available!
See details on page 7

ABILITY'S FACEBOOK PAGE

Get the latest news and tips on assistive technology at
www.facebook.com/AbilityTechnology



Ability Technology

Lipstick

The Lipstick is an alternative for people who cannot use a standard computer mouse. All mouse functions can be controlled with the mouth.

The screen cursor follows the movements of the mouth; the buttons are operated with the lips.

The LipStick has several unique features:

- Control by force: Only minimal head movements are necessary to move the cursor. The required force can be adjusted. At maximum sensitivity, less than 10 grams of force is required to move the cursor.
- Precise cursor control: Screen cursor movements are smooth and flowing.
- Mouse clicks with lips: Left or right mouse clicks are produced by lifting the upper or lower lip, not by sipping or puffing as in other mouth controlled devices. We found lifting the upper lip to be the easiest method of control for clicking functions.
- Completely closed construction: There are no hygienic problems with saliva accumulation as can be the case with sipping and puffing. Electrically isolated capacitive touch sensors determine the lip position. Easily cleaned with any usual detergent or disinfectant.
- Robust design: The LipStick has no moving parts that can wear out or have to be replaced regularly. The metal case is highly shockproof. The mouthpiece is made of medical grade high performance plastic and bite proof.



Customisation: The Lipstick comes with special Windows software that can be used to change various settings to suit personal preferences or applications. Up to five user setting profiles can be stored and quickly and easily selected. Note that although the settings need be setup on Windows, those settings apply in whatever operating system the device is used. These preferences are stored in the device itself.

Compatibility: The LipStick is plug and play and can be used with any Windows, Apple or Linux computer with a USB connector. It can also be used with Android tablets or smartphones that have a USB host or OTG connector.

Get more information at: <http://www.shannonelectronics.nl>

Pricing and local supply are still being arranged but the price is likely to be around \$1,400.

The LipStick

Android 5.0 (Lollipop) Accessibility

Android 5.0 has some enhanced accessibility features.

Talkback: Google Talkback gives you verbal, audio, and vibration cues by acting as a built-in screen reader. It's helpful for people with vision impairment and can be activated easily from inside the accessibility menu. For more on Google Talkback go to: <http://www.androidcentral.com/what-google-talk-back>.

Switch Access: This is new for Lollipop. It allows you to configure external switches to perform certain tasks, thus assisting people with physical or vision impairments. For more information see: <https://support.google.com/accessibility/android/answer/6122836?hl=en>

Captions: Enables the system wide closed caption system for videos. This was first introduced in KitKat. It allows videos to display captions based on determined parameters and you can change the text size and color within set parameters.

Magnification Gestures: Magnifies the entire system interface. Activate by triple-tapping on the display inside any apps on the device, pan around using a two-finger drag and zoom in/out further using pinch-to-zoom.

Large Text: If you just want the text bigger, everywhere, activate it here. You don't get to choose how much bigger it is, but it does exactly what it says it will. You can fine tune the text size further in the display options.

High Contrast Text: Instead of making text bigger, this will highlight items that are naturally more difficult to read for people with vision impairment. White text (regardless of the background color it sits on top of) will be outlined in black and lighter colors such as grays are made black so they're easier to see.

Text to Speech: This allows you to select the text-to-speech engine of your choice, where Google's is the default. Languages can be chosen, male/female voices and the quality of sound you prefer.

Touch and Hold Delays: For those with dexterity issues, how long you need to press and hold to complete actions can be an issue. This allows you to alter the duration required to three different settings.

Color Correction: There are options to change the display mode based on different types of color blindness: Deuteranomaly (red-green), Protanomaly (red-green) and Tritanomaly (blue-yellow)

Get more information from:

<http://www.androidcentral.com/accessibility-features-android-50-lollipop>, and

<https://support.google.com/accessibility/android/?hl=en#>



Welcome to the Android Accessibility Help Center

- + Android Accessibility
- + TalkBack
- + Accessibility system features common to all applications
- + BrailleBack
- + Updates

Continuity - Mobile phone calls and SMS on your iPad or Mac!

With Continuity, you can make and receive mobile phone calls from your iPad, iPod Touch, or Mac when your iPhone is on the same Wi-Fi network. To make and receive phone calls, here's what you need:

- * Sign in to the same iCloud account on all your devices, including your Mac.

- * Your iPhone and your iPad or iPod touch need to use iOS 8 or later. Your Mac needs to use OS X Yosemite.

- * All devices must be on the same Wi-Fi network.

- * All devices must be signed in to FaceTime using the same iCloud account. This means any device that shares your Apple ID will get your phone calls.

- * Wi-Fi Calling needs to be off. Go to Settings > Phone. If you see Wi-Fi Calling, turn it off.

To make a phone call on your Mac, iPad or iPod Touch tap or click a phone number in Contacts, Calendar, or Safari.

To answer a phone call on your iPad or iPod Touch, just slide to answer. On your Mac, you see a notification when you receive a call on your iPhone. You can answer the call, send it to voicemail, or send the caller a message, right from your Mac.

With Continuity, all the SMS and MMS text messages you send and receive on your iPhone also appear on your Mac, iPad, and iPod touch. Even if the person you're communicating with doesn't have an iPhone. And regardless of what phone they have, you can reply from whichever device is closest to you, including your iPad or Mac. You can also initiate a conversation by clicking a phone number in Safari, Contacts, or Calendar.

More info at: <http://support.apple.com/en-au/HT6337>



KNFB Reader iOS

"By harnessing the power of digital photography coupled with state of the art Apple hardware, this new app, tailored to the specific needs of people who are blind or visually impaired, makes access to print materials much faster and more efficient than ever."

"With the touch of a single button, read virtually any type of printed text, including mail, receipts, class handouts, memos and many other documents... Accuracy is facilitated by a field of view report, automatic page detection, and tilt control... Proprietary document analysis technology determines the words and reads them aloud to the user with high quality text-to-speech."

It has reading modes for single and multicolumn formats; text navigation by line, sentence, word and character; synchronized text highlighting with Braille and high quality speech output; tilt guidance and report to assist with aligning the camera relative to the document; the ability to import, OCR and read image based PDF and JPG, as well as Export HTML and TXT files to cloud storage including Dropbox and Google Drive. The KNFB Reader can recognize and read printed materials in a variety of languages (see web site for details: <http://knfbreader.com/#welcome>).

It is available from the Apple Store for A\$99.99

Our challenge Sensotec was founded in 1986 as a company active in the development of aids for blind children, their parents and teachers in mainstream education. We have since grown into a business with 35 employees, operating from 3 sites. Over the



Professional Development Workshops



Ability In-House Training



Our expert staff conduct workshops and in-house training sessions to equip groups and organisations with a firm understanding of the benefits of assistive technology for people with a disability.

Our workshops demonstrate the functional benefits of various types of assistive technology and give independent comparative evaluations and demonstrations.

"I went home so enthusiastic and keen to share our new-found expertise!"

"Very interesting and extremely useful"



Computers



Tablets



Augmentative & Alternative Communication



Environmental Control Units

If you would like Ability Technology to contribute to your workshop, expo or in-house training or development day, then please contact Ability:

Phone: (02) 9907 9736 Email: info@ability.org.au Web: www.ability.org.au

iPad Keyboards

One great feature in iOS 8 has been the ability for 3rd party developers to design customised keyboards for iOS devices. Assistive technology has been one of the first areas to benefit, with several new products quickly available. The Keeble keyboard is one example. From Assistiveware in the USA, who are well known for great products such as Pictello, the Keeble keyboard is a fine example of what a specialised iOS keyboard can offer. You can have upper case and lower case letters, coloured letters, a CAPS lock key, a TAB key, text-to-speech and a very effective word prediction feature. The main downside is the loss of the microphone button.



Now it is true that word prediction is available in specialised iOS apps such as iReadWrite and Co: Writer BE, but the word prediction is only available within those apps, not generally within the iOS environment. The Keeble keyboard is available everywhere that text can be entered, making it much more useful. The Keeble keyboard costs A\$18.99.

iPad Speech Recognition

Many people are unaware that speech recognition is available from within the iPad keyboard. Whenever you can enter text, you can speak it instead, with one proviso - you must have access to the internet. This is because the text transcription takes place in the Cloud - very quickly, mind you. The advantage of this facility is that you don't need to run another app to use speech recognition - it's always there for you.

We have found the speech recognition, which requires no training, to be effective in most cases, although obviously the experience will vary from user to user.

Flic - The Wireless Smart Button

Flic is a simple and stylish wireless button that lets you create a shortcut to your favorite actions so that you don't have to touch your phone. Flic uses Bluetooth Low Energy to communicate with your device and is compatible with iPhone 4s & later, iPad 3rd generation & later and select Android devices with 4.3 and later with Bluetooth 4.0. It has a stated range of up to 150 feet and a battery life of 5 years.



Uses abound, but include calling specific people, control of home automation features, sending a distress signal and using it as a remote switch for your smartphone's camera.

It is expected to be available in March 2015. It can be pre-purchased for US\$27.

See more at: <https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/flic-the-wireless-smart-button>

ABILITY News

TELECONNECTION HANDBOOK

This handbook is based on our research over the past 18 months, as part of a project funded by Perpetual. It is a practical guide to assist groups to better take advantage of this new technology to assist clients. It will be released and available in January 2015.

RECENT ACTIVITIES

Recent trips by Ability staff have included Perth, Newcastle, Wollongong, Maitland, Armidale, Brisbane, Yass and Shepparton (Vic).

ARATA BOARD

Graeme Smith has joined the Board of ARATA and is looking forward to contributing some of his experience with ARATA team.

HOLIDAY CLOSURE

The staff at Ability are taking a well-earned break over the Christmas period. Our last day at the office is **Friday 19 December 2014** and we are open once again on **Wednesday 14 January 2015**.

We will be checking emails during that period (sporadically) if you need to contact us.

Enable Loan Pool

This is up and running once again and covers speech generating devices and environmental control systems. EnableNSW has purchased a number of speech generating devices, environmental control systems and accessories which are available to prescribers for consumer trials and permanent loan if suitable. Details are available here:

<http://www.enable.health.nsw.gov.au/home/services/speech-generating-device-loan-pool>

TryIT - Ability's Loan Pool

We believe there is no substitute for trialling equipment, prior to purchase. Often there is no other way to determine suitability. This benefits both the individual and the funding body. To meet that need in the area of computer and tablet access, we have initiated our own loan pool, called TryIT. This is not a funded activity, unfortunately, so there will be a charge for the service, to cover our costs.

The equipment included will grow gradually, but will start with the following:

* QuadJoy *Lipstick * SmartNAV *Possum Primo (ECU) *Switch-adapted Telstra Phone * Possum Sero Phone *Tecla DOS Switch Interface * Switch-adapted mobile phone speaker kit * PC-TRAC Trackball * Laptop computer with Dragon Naturally Speaking and inSync USB Buddy microphone * A range of switches. We hope soon to include a HouseMate with an Android device.

For more information, please contact us at: info@ability.org.au

Happy Christmas!

We take this opportunity to wish all of you a very happy Christmas! It has been an exciting year in the field of assistive technology and it has been our pleasure to share some of it with you. We have some great ideas developing for 2015 and we look forward to linking up with you in the year ahead.

Alan, Bronwyn, Deidre, Gemma, Graeme, Guy, Jeremy and Sandra.



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