

June 2022

## Position Statement

Provision of GEAT (goods, equipment and assistive technology) and home modifications under Australia's new aged care system.

We call on the Department of Health to ensure Australia's new aged care system provides timely and equitable access to GEAT and home modifications to older people with disability, in accordance with the aspirations of Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-31.

Specifically, we call on the Department of Health to apply the following recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety as it finalises critical components of the new aged care system.

### Recommendation 72

*By 1 July 2024, every person receiving aged care who is living with disability, regardless of when acquired, should receive through the aged care program daily living supports and outcomes (including assistive technologies, aids and equipment) equivalent to those that would be available under the National Disability Insurance Scheme to a person under the age of 65 years with the same or substantially similar conditions.*

### Recommendation 125

*Individuals who are assessed as needing social supports, assistive technologies and home modifications, or care at home should not be required to contribute to the costs of that support.*

Investing in improved access to GEAT and home modifications now will lead to reduced Government expenditure in other areas. For every dollar spent on assistive technology, there is a conservative two-fold return on investment relating to savings on the cost of paid carers, support and medical services. The timely provision of GEAT and home modifications will also enable more older Australians to age in place and remain at home for as long as possible, preventing or delaying their entry into residential care.

It is also critical that GEAT and home modifications are provided in a timely manner. Right now, lengthy delays prevent many older people from accessing these supports when they need them. This can result in a further deterioration in their autonomy, health and wellbeing, and increase the long-term cost of their care. To resolve this issue, the new aged care system must:

- Prioritise responsiveness and acknowledge the importance of early intervention
- Specify timeframes for decision making around the provision of GEAT and home modifications, consistent with the aspirations of the NDIS Participant Service Guarantee.

The new aged care system must also be adequately funded to cover the cost of:

- Early access to skilled assessment and referral
- Equipment trials, demonstration and loan, where appropriate
- Procurement and customisation, as prescribed
- Delivery and setup, where required
- Training to ensure the individual can use their assistive products safely and effectively
- Timely maintenance and review.

Finally, the new aged care system must provide timely and equitable access to GEAT and home modifications for all older Australians who need these supports, including:

- Those with a pre-existing disability who do not meet the age eligibility requirements for the NDIS
- Those who acquire disability due to the chronic, progressive or degenerative nature of a pre-existing condition
- Those who experience the sudden onset of disability as a result of an accident, medical condition or other trauma, and
- Those who experience disability as a result of many of the common, often concurrently occurring chronic diseases associated with ageing.

The combination of measures outlined in this position statement will ensure older Australians can gain the maximum benefit from GEAT and home modifications and will prevent the abandonment of equipment that is not fit for purpose. This will result in further downstream savings by:

- Promoting independence and reablement
- Reducing the rate of age-related physical decline
- Reducing the extent and cost of other forms of support required
- Preventing the onset of secondary health conditions
- Reducing the risk of falls
- Reducing hospital admissions.
- Delaying or preventing premature entry to residential care.