

# A CHALLENGE FOR VOICE, CHOICE AND CONTROL

**Sarah Butler**

I have been a member of the CDS inclusive research network since 2010. The Inclusive research network has been presenting at the ASID National Conference since 2012. Prior to NDIS all costs associated with the conference were funded by ADHC through my individualised package. This included flights, accommodation, registration fee etc.

At my NDIS planning meeting I explained to the local area coordinator the activities that I do now with my ADHC existing funding. NDIA stated that despite one of my goals being to maintain access to current community groups and social participation, it is not reasonable and necessary that the NDIS fund my ASID conferences. I applied for a review of the reviewable decision, to not fund the conference, however this was declined.

I contacted the NDIS Appeals Officer at Intellectual Disability Rights Service explaining to them that I am not happy with my plan as the NDIS will not fund my ASID conferences. The NDIS Appeals Officer sent the outcome of the review from the NDIA to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. The NDIS Appeals Officers provided support for me to receive free legal assistance through Legal Aid NSW. The AAT over turned the original decision made from NDIA, an agreement was written and signed by the solicitor on my behalf showing the outcome of the agreement between the National Disability Insurance Agency and myself under section 42c.

The agreement was sent in an email to the NDIA to notify them of the decision from the AAT. The ASID 2018 conference costs were paid for out of my NDIS package this is the first time that I have been able to use my NDIS package after funding through ADHC ceased.

The NDIS Appeals Officer said “I feel very lucky you have a solicitor with a lot of knowledge and experience if you didn’t have that solicitor and had have had someone else your chances of gaining the outcome you achieved would not have been as high” I was really happy that the AAT over turned the original decision made by the NDIA not to fund the conference.



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The solicitor advised that if the AAT had not overruled the decision and I needed to go to the federal court my matter would be novel and complex. I have since had a discussion with an assistant director at the NDIA to explain how important it is that my ASID conferences are funded on an ongoing basis without having to go through the same process again, taking the matter to the AAT to have a new agreement for the same matter. I was advised that an alert will be placed on my NDIS file that the registration, fares, accommodation and related travel will be funded on an ongoing basis each plan.

I am very proud to be a member of the inclusive research and continuing to present at conferences and ongoing funding is vital to the network and well as my personal and professional development.

### **Sarah Butler**

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# COMMUNICATION ACCESSIBLE COMMUNITIES

As an ASID representative I attended the Communication Access Alliance meeting held by Speech Pathology Australia on February 11th. The alliance is a broad group of representatives whose aim is to ensure communities are communication accessible in Australia. The group has been meeting once or twice year since 2017 and has links with work occurring, nationally and internationally, to raise awareness of communication as a basic human right and Communication Access. One of the links is with global policy work being coordinated through the International Communication Project (ICP) [www.internationalcommunicationproject.com/](http://www.internationalcommunicationproject.com/).

The focus of this meeting was discussion around the findings of a draft review of the literature funded through Speech Pathology Australia scoping the research pertaining to communication access. This review will be finalised soon with an accompanying Easy English version. Discussions ensued relating to definitions, legislations and standards. One of the definitions preferred by meeting attendees was communication support needs. There was much discussion as to whom this definition included and whether it should exclude people without a disability who might have little English or limited literacy. The meeting concluded with a desire to hold a range of focus groups of people who might be considered to have communication support needs, those with sensory impairments, receptive and/or expressive communication disorders and users of augmentative and alternative communication. These groups would allow for time to discuss the definitions and decide for themselves.

### **Hilary Johnson**

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