

Information sheet No.1

Rehabilitation Technology Unit RPH Shenton Park Campus



Augmentative Communications (AAC) and Technology Access

AAC provides the means for individuals with severe disability as a result of a vocal or physical impairment to communicate through synthesised speech and the written word. Assistive technology provides the avenue to improved independence by enabling the individual to access and control their environment and by promoting their participation in society through the use of appropriate solutions.

THE PROVISION OF AN APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY

It is important that the technology selected by an individual is appropriate to his or her needs and that it makes optimum use of their capabilities in achieving maximum benefit from the technology.

This requires;

- ◆ *realistic and competent assessment of the client's abilities and their aspirations.*
- ◆ *expert knowledge of both the capabilities and the limitations of the various technology options available to the individual and importantly,*
- ◆ *a commitment to the adaptation and application of the technology to make it "fit" the client over the life of the equipment.*

The provision of appropriate technology may be a transient achievement, as the client's skill base and their aspirations change. This may result from changing disability or may be attributed to client development, possibly through use of the technology. Some technologies offer open ended solutions that can develop with the client. Ability to exercise these options, rather than wasting initial capital caused by building in facility that may or may not be used by the client, is important

This is where the experienced technologist can help.



WHAT SHOULD YOU LOOK FOR IN AN ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SERVICE PROVIDER ?

A competent AAC and AT Service Supplier should be able to provide;

- ◆ *informed assistance with or provision of client assessment*
- ◆ *capacity to trial equipment for the purpose of evaluation and client assessment*
- ◆ *in-depth experience with and advice on a range of technology options and strategies applicable to the client*
- ◆ *competent selection, specification and commissioning of the technology*
- ◆ *the adaptation of equipment to optimise its use by the client and to integrate effectively with the client's environment and other technology needs.*
- ◆ *ongoing support with training, maintenance and upgrading of equipment*

THE AAC GROUP ATTACHED TO THE REHABILITATION TECHNOLOGY UNIT AT RPH CAN SUPPLY SUCH A SERVICE

AAC TECHNOLOGY: SUPPLYING A COMPLETE SERVICE.

The AAC Group at RPH has an extensive and growing experience with a wide range of electronic and computer based technologies which offer solutions to the problems caused by communication disability.

WHAT HAPPENS PRIOR TO CLIENT EVALUATION ?

It is essential that the Speech Pathologist and other practitioners familiar with the clients condition, compile an extensive assessment of the individual's physical and cognitive skills, their aims and aspirations and any social or environmental constraints prior to considering the equipment needed. Precise knowledge of the problem will enable an accurate and hopefully, optimal solution. The AAC Group is keen to assist in this process, ensuring that all the information required for good technology selection is covered. The assessment should not presume a solution and should avoid the pitfalls of making the client fit a given technology!

Given such an assessment, it is the AAC Group's responsibility to evaluate a range of technology options which may offer a solution and to work with the client, their carers and support staff to select, specify and to implement the best and most cost effective solution available.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER EVALUATION ?

The AAC Group will determine a technical specification and organise the purchase or loan of equipment. Importantly, the Group will;

- ◆ *recieve, commission and check any equipment purchased*
- ◆ *implement and trial any software required and customise it to suit the client's need*
- ◆ *adapt the equipment to fit the client's enviorns and to integrate it with any other technology required (eg. wheelchair, workplace)*
- ◆ *manufacture and fit custom components, special switches and interface devices to optimise client access*
- ◆ *implement warranty arrangements and provide repair and maintenance services as required*
- ◆ *train the client, family, carers and staff in the use of and care for the system*
- ◆ *review the technology as required and adjust and upgrade it to ensure best performance*

The AAC group comprises experienced AAC practitioners with the backup of the Rehabilitation Engineering, Technical Service and Computing facilities at RPH (Shenton Park and Wellington St)

WHERE CAN THIS HAPPEN ?

The AAC Group is aware of the difficulty clients often experience in attending clinics etc.. We are also aware that good and well informed assessment is often best performed where the client lives and works.

Normally, work would be conducted in the Hospital but the AAC Group has some capacity to travel to the client. Equipment and adaptations can be provided on-site to assist assessment and system implementation . If you feel such attendance would benefit your client, please contact us to arrange an appointment. We will see what we can do!

AUGMENTATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

Augmentative Communication provides hardware, software and non-technical strategies to non-speaking and non-writing individuals. The AAC Group maintains a strong network of commercial and professional contacts both in Australia and overseas to ensure that contemporary technology and techniques are available to clients in WA.

COMPUTER ACCESS & WORKPLACE DESIGN

The AAC group adapts computers to meet the needs of clients with sensory and/or physical impairment so they can access educational, recreational and work place facilities

ADAPTATION, DESIGN & FABRICATION OF CUSTOM SOLUTIONS

Commercial devices often need adaptations to meet the needs of individual clients. The AAC Group designs and implements such adaptations. When nothing suitable is available commercially, staff can design and manufacture custom devices

for further information, please feel free to contact;

**Mr. Trevor Jones, Sen. Scientific Officer
Bioengineering RPH (08) 9224 3226**