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**ATSE SYDNEY WORKSHOP
25-26 OCTOBER 2012**

Emerging Assistive and Medical Technologies Network **COMMUNIQUÉ**

**PREPARED BY THE AUSTRALIAN ACADEMY OF TECHNOLOGICAL
SCIENCES AND ENGINEERING (ATSE)**

NOVEMBER 2012

WORKSHOP COMMUNIQUÉ

"In the long history of mankind (and animal kind) those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed."

– Charles Darwin

There are technologies currently available, or being developed, which can greatly assist people with limitations associated with ageing or disability to enjoy a better quality of and more productive life.

The Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering (ATSE) convened a workshop in Sydney on 25 and 26 October 2012 to discuss the formation of a network to link technology providers, researchers, consumers and carer organisations and their representatives across the disability and aged care sector.

The workshop was attended by about 30 participants, representing a broad spectrum of these interests. The workshop highlighted:

- the opportunities and challenges emerging from the application of assistive technologies for older Australians and people with a disability;
- the future of the Australian medical technology industry and its possible contribution;
- the potential for assistive technologies to significantly transform human capabilities; and
- the role of cross-sectoral collaboration in effective application of enabling technologies.

The last of these, based on the experiences of the South Australian Medical Device Partners Program (which was the subject of a workshop presentation), provided a particularly powerful model of what could be achieved, despite major barriers, through building effective collaboration and networks.

This communiqué is based on discussions at the workshop and views expressed by the majority of the delegates.

1. ENABLE HEALTHY INDEPENDENT LIVING

As Australia's population ages, we will face increasing challenges in maintaining healthcare standards. The deployment of assistive technologies can help improve quality of life and decrease healthcare costs. These same technologies can improve the quality of life for Australians with disabilities.

2. FACILITATE COLLABORATION

Currently, there are only very limited mechanisms for bringing Emerging Assistive and Medical Technology (EAMT) stakeholders together to work on the development and deployment of smart technologies that can confer so many benefits in life quality and value to the economy.

"The multidisciplinary nature of aged care services across ICT, health and medical care, housing and other services means that many stakeholders and agencies need to work together to fully implement the vision for aged care in the future."

– National Enabling Technologies Strategy Expert Forum

To ensure that Australia maximises the benefits from the wide range of existing and emerging assistive and medical technologies strong communication channels between the various parties in a range of different fields are needed. The multidisciplinary nature of these different fields makes the creation of a network even more important, if we are to make real progress in harnessing assistive technologies to meet growing needs.

3. ESTABLISH A VISION

The workshop established a clear vision for the future network, with an emphasis on a positive positioning to support high-quality lives with ready access to economic opportunities and social engagement for all Australians constrained by ageing and disability. It agreed the ultimate users of technology-assisted products and services should be the central focus of all activity.

4. DEVELOP A NETWORK MODEL

Workshop participants discussed the nature and scope of the proposed network. Examples of other successful networks were carefully examined and useful guidelines established. It agreed the proposed network needed to go beyond facilitating communication to include promoting collaboration.

The aim agreed was to ensure that the outcomes would be achieved more effectively and efficiently than if the parties had tried to achieve these on their own. The ultimate objective was to provide improved services for individuals, carers, families, healthcare personnel and for the nation as a whole.

The workshop recognised there are already a significant number of organisations with responsibility in this area. The objective of the EAMT Network would be to work with and to link these various groups by providing access to information about appropriate assistive and medical technologies and constraints to their effective application and diffusion.

A number of appropriate roles for the EAMT network were identified. These included:

- facilitating advocacy for the removal of barriers to the effective adoption of EAMTs;
- providing access to information and expertise (an information hub);
- developing a capacity to analyse and advise on regulations and standards, and
- promoting collaboration between researchers, industry, government and consumers.

The workshop noted that social networking tools could provide an important mechanism for identifying and engaging a wider audience for the potential of the application of EAMTs.

It agreed a self-sustaining model for the network was essential and would need to be based on an appropriate business model which generated the revenue necessary for the network to operate as an independent and authoritative body.

A range of potential investors, or sponsors, were identified across a number of sectors and raising of funds from Governments, and via a membership scheme, were also examined.



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5. MOVE FORWARD

The participants expressed strong commitment to establish an appropriate EAMT (or similarly named) Network.

The ATSE Steering Committee determined it would develop a short paper, outlining the value proposition for the network for both members and investors, and a draft Business Plan to assist the “start-up phase” of an EAMT Network in 2013.

“The most dramatic innovation introduced with the roll out of our species is not the prowess of individual minds but the ability to harness that prowess across many individuals.”
– Jason Mitchell 2010

WORKSHOP KEY SESSIONS

Future of the Medical Technology Industry in Australia: Linking Research, Industry and End Users

Ms Anne Trimmer, CEO, Medical Technology Association of Australia

The Role of Enabling Assistive Technologies in Aged and Disabled Care – Key Opportunities and Challenges

Mrs Jennene Buckley, CEO, Feros Care

The Role of Technology in Using Brain Plasticity – a Case Study

Professor Harvey Dillon, Director of Research, National Acoustic Laboratories

The Role of Cross-Section Collaboration in Addressing Opportunities and Challenges for Enabling Assistive Technologies

Professor Karen Reynolds FTSE, Director, Medical Device Research Institute

WORKSHOP DETAILS

The workshop was held at the NSW Trade and Investment Centre, Sydney, on 25 & 26 October, involving over 30 participants including senior representatives from government, industry, academia, public sector research organisations and potential funding agencies. For details please see the [Workshop Programme](#) and [Workshop Issues Paper](#).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABOUT ATSE

The Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering is an independent not-for-profit organisation. Our Fellowship, more than 800 outstanding scientists, technologists and engineers drives our mission: to foster excellence in technological sciences and engineering to enhance Australia's competitiveness, economic and social wellbeing and environmental sustainability. The Academy provides robust, independent, science and technology evidence based policy advice to government, industry and the community. More information on the Academy can be found at www.atse.org.au.

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