

## **Leading their way: AAC and MND**

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### **Short Abstract**

Providing resources for clients with Motor Neurone Disease (MND) to explore, navigate and implement their individualised communication solution is pivotal to ensuring clients can communicate despite their MND. This abstract outlines how the MND Association of South Australia's (MNDSA) Access, Technology and Communication Service empowers clients to lead their own communication journey.

By listening to and understanding each client's unique needs, preferences, and existing knowledge, the team work to develop and trial communication strategies. The team encourage early discussions on communication and technology options, including voice banking, to ensure timely interventions that align with the client's progression and readiness. Together we create strategies that provides solutions for today, tomorrow and as their MND progresses.

The team provides support by providing clear information and choices without being prescriptive. This fosters an environment where clients feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and explore options without judgement.

Ultimately, the teams role is to facilitate a supportive environment where clients with MND can confidently lead their communication journey, ensuring that their voices are heard and respected throughout the process.

We will share client stories of their journey from early diagnosis to late stage MND. This will be evidenced by client's sharing their story and how communication and assistive technology tools have enabled them to maintain connections with those around them and control their lives. By setting meaningful goals and preparing for potential challenges, the team empower clients to take the lead on their communication journey.

### **Long Abstract**

Providing the tools and resources for clients living with Motor Neurone Disease (MND) to explore, navigate and implement their own individualised communication solutions is pivotal to ensuring clients can continue to communicate and access technology in a way that suits them despite their MND diagnosis. This abstract outlines how the MND Association of South Australia's (MNDSA) Access, Technology and Communication Service empowers clients to lead their own communication journey.

By listening to and understanding each client's unique needs, preferences, and existing knowledge about communication and technology, the team work to develop and trial

communication strategies. Establishing a collaborative relationship is crucial, as it allows clients to express their goals and expectations for their changing communication needs. The team encourages early discussions on communication and technology options, including time sensitive strategies such as voice banking, to ensure responsive interventions that align with MND progression and readiness to embrace the use of technology to assist their communication. Together we create strategies that provide solutions for today, tomorrow and as their MND progresses.

A client lead approach respects the individual's autonomy, allowing them to explore and choose the communication and technology that best fits their lifestyle. We will share client stories of their journey from early diagnosis to late stage MND. This will be evidenced by client's sharing their journey and how communication and assistive technologies have enabled them to maintain connections with those around them and control their lives.

Through this presentation, client stories will be shared to demonstrate the similarities, differences and choices between each of their individual pathways. Their stories will reflect information relevant to both NDIS and My Aged Care recipients and highlights how MNDSA supports clients no matter their funding source.

Depending on the person, their wishes, their differing environments and their familiarity and comfort with technology we can assist people to understand solutions ranging from low tech to high tech. Where possible we promote awareness and utilisation of the client's mainstream technology and built in accessibility features whilst considering dedicated device options including eyegaze.

The team supports this by providing clear information and choices without being prescriptive. This fosters an environment where clients feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and explore options without the fear of judgement.

Managing expectations is another critical aspect of the teams role. Additionally, the teams' role is to facilitate a supportive environment where clients with MND can confidently lead their communication journey, ensuring their voices are heard and respected.

In conclusion, by collaboratively establishing communication goals and offering holistic support, we can empower individuals with MND to lead their communication journey with confidence.

## References

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