



# Aids and Equipment Action Alliance

Making participation and inclusion a reality

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## MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN MEMBERS OF THE AIDS AND EQUIPMENT ACTION ALLIANCE

### Purpose:

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is to outline the agreement reached by the members of the Aids and Equipment Action Alliance (Victoria).

### Context:

The Aids and Equipment Action Alliance (AEAA) was developed following joint work by the Association for Children with a Disability, Melbourne Citymission, Scope and Disability Justice Advocacy, with involvement from Yooralla, to hold the *Equipping Inclusion Forum* in October 2006.

This initial group of organisations came together due to their shared concern about the high level of unmet need for aids and equipment in Victoria. Two research reports (one by Melbourne Citymission and one by Scope) were published to highlight these issues. The *Equipping Inclusion Forum* was held to explore policy options for an improved aids and equipment system and involved a wide range of stakeholders from the disability sector, including people with a disability. The Forum coincided with the Victorian Government 2006 Review of the Victorian Aids and Equipment Program.

The Aids and Equipment Action Alliance was formed in response to the high level of interest expressed at the Forum. The Alliance aims to achieve real change around the provision of aids and equipment to people with a disability. It is expected that the Alliance will have a long-term advocacy role on a range of issues including investment, systemic improvements, and mechanisms for promoting choice and control for people with disabilities.

### Membership:

Members of the Aids and Equipment Action Alliance consist of a wide range of stakeholders who are signatories to this Memorandum of Understanding, including people with a disability, advocacy organisations, community service organisations (which support people with a disability), academics and representatives from key health and allied health providers.

Members can be **individual** members or nominated **organisational** representatives. The nominated organisational representatives have the authority to transfer information and facilitate collective decision-making. There will be only one vote per organisation.

**Associate** members of the Alliance receive information about the work of the Alliance but are not part of the decision-making process and are not signatories to the Memorandum of Understanding. Due to potential conflict of interest, commercial equipment suppliers are not eligible to be organisational representatives, however they can be associate members.



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## Current Structure as at October 2009:

### **AEAA Funding**

The Aids and Equipment Action Alliance is currently financed through philanthropic trusts, and member pledges. It does not receive any government funding.

### **AEAA Staff:**

The AEAA may employ staff to undertake work on behalf of the AEAA. The auspice agency and AEAA executive committee are responsible for staffing as outlined below.

### **The AEAA Project Coordinator**

The Project Coordinator is employed by the auspice agency. The Project Coordinator reports to the AEAA Executive Committee and their employer (the auspice agency). The project Coordinator role includes:

- Coordinates membership: acts as a first point of contact for new enquirers, and maintains the Membership database.
- Responds to members' queries and links people up as necessary.
- Completes administration for forum meetings: ensures agendas and minutes are circulated, rooms booked, chair confirmed, etc.
- Coordinates the activity of working groups between meetings: acts as a link between the groups and ensures timelines are met.
- Facilitates communication between members in relation to issues / activities.

### **The Auspice Agency**

The auspice agency is Multiple Sclerosis Limited (MSL), the employer of the AEAA staff, including AEAA Project Coordinator and therefore is required to provide the infrastructure required to support the AEAA staff. A Memorandum of Understanding between the AEAA and Multiple Sclerosis Limited outlines the roles and responsibilities of the respective parties and is co-signed by the Chief Executive Officer of Multiple Sclerosis Limited and an organisational member of the AEAA Executive. The auspice agency provides the day-to-day management, support and supervision of the AEAA staff. It is responsible for reporting, reconciliation and disbursement of funds and will provide a quarterly financial report to the AEAA Executive Committee.

### **AEAA Executive Committee**

The membership of this committee includes the convenors of the working groups, up to 7 nominated members of the AEAA and a nominee from the auspice agency of the Project Coordinator, that is, 8 in total.

- The Executive is empowered by the AEAA membership to make urgent decisions between forums consistent with the principles outlined in the Position Statement.
- The Executive will consult with the AEAA membership when necessary and coordinate activities of the AEAA.
- A quorum for the executive is 4 members.
- The Project Coordinator will act as secretary to the Executive.
- Oversight of the work of the Project Coordinator is the role of the Executive.
- There will be a call for nominations for the Executive annually, by e-mail in February.



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## **AEAA Research and Student Projects**

The Aids and Equipment Action Alliance works with universities on projects and research relevant to the alliance. Student projects are supervised through the institution with an alliance representative. Research projects are partnerships with organisations including universities undertaking the research. The Research projects report to the AEAA executive committee.

## **AEAA Working Groups**

The working groups will report to the AEAA Executive and be formed as required. Working groups will also report back to the forum at meetings and consult as required.

## **AEAA Forum**

All members of the Aids and Equipment Action Alliance meet as needed to progress the work of the Alliance. Forums will be chaired by a volunteer member, nominated at the previous forum. Forums will be held at least twice per year. Communication between forums will be by email.

## **Conflicts of Interest:**

The Aids and Equipment Action Alliance is committed to high standards of ethical conduct and accordingly places great importance on making clear any existing or potential conflict of interest. Examples of conflict of interest could be (but are not limited to):

- When a member, his/her immediate family or business interests stands to gain financially from any business dealings of the Alliance
- When a member him or herself offers a professional service to the organisation beyond that inherent in their role as an AEAA member.
- When a member stands to gain personally or professionally from any insider knowledge if that knowledge is used to personal advantage.

Members shall declare any conflicts of interest at the start of a meeting or when a relevant issue arises. The nature of this conflict of interest should be recorded.

Where a conflict of interest is identified the member should leave the room, not vote on the issue, nor initiate or take part in any discussion unless expressly invited to do so by all other members present.

## **Dispute Resolution**

The Aids and Equipment Action Alliance is committed to reaching a speedy and just resolution of any disputes or grievances that may arise and threaten the harmonious functioning of the Alliance. This policy refers to disputes:

- Between members of the Alliance
- Between the Project Coordinator and members of the Alliance

Note: a dispute between the AEAA staff and the employer, Multiple Sclerosis Limited is subject to that organisation's Dispute Resolutions Policy.



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## Procedure

- Where possible, attempted resolution between the parties should take place in the spirit of partnership
- If unable to be resolved, the dispute should be put in writing to the Executive to be brought to the next meeting, or if necessary an extraordinary Executive meeting
- When raised at an Executive meeting, all people involved in the dispute will be given the right to be heard.
- Members of the Executive will vote on a proposed outcome, e.g., to seek legal advice, to dismiss the complaint.

## Decision Making Process:

The Aids and Equipment Action Alliance (AEAA) is a cooperative venture with the explicit aims of achieving increased investment in the Victorian Aids and Equipment Program, and ensuring greater choice and equity for people with a disability and their carers in the way aids and equipment policies, programs, and supports are delivered.

- The members have agreed to meet, resource and collaborate in an effort to achieve the above aims.
- The members agree to be proactive in the sharing of information.
- The members agree to actively participate in AEAA work.
- AEAA representation by members or AEAA staff on other bodies or advisory groups will only be as endorsed by the AEAA executive committee. Members are not to represent AEAA without such endorsement.
- It is understood that some activities of the AEAA will require sign off at the executive level for member organisations. Members agree not to make any public announcement or statement or publish documents or act in the name of the AEAA without the knowledge and consideration of all members.
- The members agree to provide timely responses to the AEAA's requests for consideration of action.
- If there is a difference of opinion about a proposed public act, the AEAA will attempt to resolve this constructively and in the spirit of partnership. If necessary there will be an acknowledgement of a minority view or acknowledgement that some members are not part of the public act.
- Each member organisation will have only one vote.
- Each member organisation should nominate one contact person for that agency. Other members of the organisation may be involved in the work of the AEAA.