

# Victorian Aids and Equipment Program operational policies

June 2020



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Wellbeing and Community Supports

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# Purpose of the operational policies

The operational policies provide a framework for delivering the Victorian Aids and Equipment Program (VA&EP). These operational policies supersede all previous versions and reflect current Department of Health and Human Services policy.

The operational policies generally relate to the services provided by the State-wide Equipment Program (SWEPP).

The term 'assistive technology' applies to devices and modifications whose primary purpose is to maintain or improve a person's functioning and independence. In this context, the assistive technology available under the VA&EP includes aids and equipment, home and vehicle modifications and some specific health-related items.

## Terms used in this document

- 'Assistive technology' is used throughout the document to refer to all assistive technology or health items or subsidies available from the VA&EP.
- 'Service providers' refers to the community service organisations the department funds to administer the VA&EP schemes and programs.
- 'Asset' refers to an assistive technology 'item' that the VA&EP provider maintains ownership of. Please refer to 'Ownership' section for information on how to determine ownership.
- 'Assistive technology practitioners' refers to the therapists and clinicians who undertake assessments and help applicants identify the most appropriate assistive technology.

# Role of the Department of Health and Human Services

The department is responsible for:

- developing policy and guidelines for operating the VA&EP including setting eligibility criteria, determining subsidy levels and the AT items that will be provided
- planning and developing new programs and schemes including analysing trends, emerging needs and projected demand
- monitoring service provision to ensure funded service providers meet service targets and quality performance measures.

## Service delivery

The department funds six community service organisations to administer the following VA&EP programs and schemes.

The [State-wide Equipment Program \(SWEP\)](https://swep.bhs.org.au/) <https://swep.bhs.org.au/> a business unit of Ballarat Health Services, is funded to administer the:

- Aids and Equipment Program
- Continence Aids Program
- Domiciliary Oxygen Program
- Supported Accommodation Equipment Assistance Scheme
- Vehicle Modification Subsidy Scheme (VMSS)
- Lymphoedema Compression Garment Program (LCGP)
- Laryngectomy Program
- Preventative Maintenance Program.

**Yooralla** is funded to administer the [Electronic Communication Devices Scheme](https://www.yooralla.com.au/services/communication-and-assistive-technology/electronic-communication-devices-scheme) <<https://www.yooralla.com.au/services/communication-and-assistive-technology/electronic-communication-devices-scheme>>.

**MND Victoria** receives a [contribution](https://www.mnd.asn.au/our-services/equipment) <<https://www.mnd.asn.au/our-services/equipment>> towards the cost of its equipment library for people who have motor neurone disease.

**Individual Solutions for Individual Needs (Solve)** is funded to design and [manufacture specialised, customised equipment](https://www.solve.org.au/) <<https://www.solve.org.au/>> for eligible people.

**Expression Australia** (formerly Vicdeaf) is funded to administer the [Smoke Alarm Scheme](https://www.expression.com.au/content.asp?cid=81&t=alarm-subsidies) <<https://www.expression.com.au/content.asp?cid=81&t=alarm-subsidies>>.

**Vision Australia Foundation** is funded to administer the [Low Cost Vision Aids Scheme](https://www.visionaustralia.org/information/adaptive-technology/help-desk) <<https://www.visionaustralia.org/information/adaptive-technology/help-desk>>.



# About the Victorian Aids and Equipment Program

## Program aim

The VA&EP provides eligible people with subsidised assistive technology to enhance independence in their home, facilitate community participation and support families and carers in their role.

## Target population and eligibility criteria

To be eligible for the VA&EP applicants must meet the following criteria:

- be a permanent resident of Victoria

**or**

- hold a Permanent Protection Visa or Humanitarian Visa or be an asylum seeker

**and**

- require assistive technology on a permanent or long-term basis for a health or ageing-related need. People with a disability who do not meet National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) eligibility due to age, residency status or functional impairment level can also apply to the VA&EP
- all additional subprogram or scheme criteria, where applicable.

Note: Information on additional eligibility criteria is available in the 'Availability and supply' section and on the funded service provider's websites.

The following also applies:

- Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Gold Card holders who do not have a DVA 'approved disability' can apply for VA&EP subsidies for a mobility scooter, a powered wheelchair and vehicle modification.
- Commonwealth Government residential aged care residents can only apply for an electronic communication device.
- Commonwealth Government levels 1 and 2 Home Care Package recipients can apply for all VA&EP assistive technology items except domiciliary oxygen. This should be part of their Home Care Package.
- Commonwealth Government levels 3 and 4 Home Care Package recipients can only apply for VA&EP subsidies for a mobility scooter, a powered wheelchair, home modification and electronic communication devices.

Please refer to pages 12 to 24 for information on additional eligibility requirements for the different VA&EP sub-programs and schemes.

## Ineligibility and exclusions

A person is **not eligible** to access supports from the VA&EP if:

- they are eligible to receive assistive technology supports from other government-funded programs including the NDIS, WorkSafe Victoria and the Transport Accident Commission
- they live in a Commonwealth-funded aged care facility or are an inpatient in a public or private health facility
- the full cost of the assistive technology can be claimed through their private health insurance (the VA&EP will fund any gap between the cost of the item and private health insurance refund if the gap does not exceed the maximum subsidy amount for the item)
- they have any form of compensation/legal settlements or court awards for assistive technology. Note, in some circumstances, a person may be eligible to access the VA&EP once compensation/settlement funds for their assistive technology has been fully expended.

## What does the VA&EP provide?

The VA&EP provides a subsidy (a level of funding) toward the purchase price of a range of assistive technology items as specified in the 'Availability and supply' section of this document.

The VA&EP has set subsidy levels for different assistive technology items. Some items have an annual subsidy limit – for example, continence products or a threshold for replacement. Some non-customised items are available at no cost.

More information about the [items and subsidy levels](https://swep.bhs.org.au/available-items-and-subsidy.php) <https://swep.bhs.org.au/available-items-and-subsidy.php> for assistive technology available from SWEP can be found on the SWEP website.

Visit the websites of the service providers for more information on their sub-program assistive technology availability:

- [Yooralla](https://www.yooralla.com.au/services/communication-and-assistive-technology/electronic-communication-devices-scheme) <https://www.yooralla.com.au/services/communication-and-assistive-technology/electronic-communication-devices-scheme>
- [MND Victoria](https://www.mnd.asn.au/our-services/equipment) <https://www.mnd.asn.au/our-services/equipment>
- [Solve](https://www.solve.org.au/) <https://www.solve.org.au/>
- [Expression Australia](https://www.expression.com.au/content.asp?cid=81&t=alarm-subsidies) <https://www.expression.com.au/content.asp?cid=81&t=alarm-subsidies>
- [Vision Australia](https://www.visionaustralia.org/information/adaptive-technology/help-desk) <https://www.visionaustralia.org/information/adaptive-technology/help-desk>.

SWEP and MND Victoria also provide a 24/7 emergency repair service for items they own.

## Subsidies not provided

The VA&EP does not provide subsidies:

- for the cost of the assessment for the assistive technology item or for the home/vehicle modification
- **retrospectively** – the VA&EP will **not reimburse or fund** any costs associated with any assistive technology that a person may have committed to before their application to the VA&EP has been submitted and approved regardless of their eligibility for a subsidy under the VA&EP
- for assistive technology specifically for use at work, in an educational settings or for recreational pursuits
- for items associated with medical treatment or surgical interventions (with the exception of medical gas/oxygen, lymphoedema garments, laryngectomy items and subsequent orthoses to treat children who have a club foot but no other associated disabilities – see the 'Availability and supply' section for more information)
- to provide assistive technology required for short periods such as post-surgery.
- for new dwellings, dwellings under construction or construction of new 'builds' to an existing dwelling.

## Public hospital and extended care centre responsibilities

For the first 30 days after discharge, public hospitals and extended care centres are responsible for providing assistive technology related to a person's hospital admission.

Public hospitals are also responsible for providing the first orthosis for patients.

For current information about public hospital responsibility for assistive technology visit [the department's fees and charges webpage](https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/hospitals-and-health-services/patient-fees-charges/other-services) <<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/hospitals-and-health-services/patient-fees-charges/other-services>>.

Applications for the VA&EP from patients who will or are likely to have a permanent need for assistive technology may be submitted while in hospital; however, the subsidy for the assistive technology will not be supplied until the 30-day post-discharge period has expired.

## Private hospital patients

The VA&EP will accept applications from eligible private hospital patients immediately on discharge for the available range of subsidised items.

## Priority of access framework

To ensure applicants most in need are assisted as soon as possible and equitably, applications are prioritised using the priority of access framework listed below (note: criteria are not listed in priority order):

- The assistive technology is **critical** to the safety of the applicant or injury prevention in daily living activities.
- Not supplying the assistive technology will lead to a deterioration in the applicant's health or functioning abilities that may result in premature admission to institutional care, hospitalisation or dependence on more costly services.
- Not making the assistive technology available will place excessive demand on carers in caring for the applicant and seriously jeopardise the current care/living arrangements.

Following the application assessment using the priority of access framework, the application will be allocated one of three triage categories, which determines possible waiting times. However, if an applicant's circumstances change after the application has been triaged and the need for the assistive technology becomes more urgent, the applicant's assistive technology practitioner can escalate the urgency of need.

## **‘No waiting’ category**

The no-wait category means the subsidy or the repair will be supplied as soon as possible after the application is approved and the applicant has sourced any required gap funding (see below).

The no-wait category applies to:

- domiciliary oxygen
- the ongoing supply of continence aids and electronic voice aids or voice prosthesis
- assets triaged as requiring immediate repair
- applications for reissue assets triaged for immediate supply
- replacement of assets deemed financially unviable to repair.

## **‘High urgency’ category**

The high urgency category means that the subsidy will be supplied as soon as funds are available to buy the item and a reissued item is not available and the applicant has sourced any required gap funding.

Criteria (not in priority order):

- The assistive technology is critical to the safety of the applicant or injury prevention in daily living activities.
- Not making the assistive technology available will lead to a deterioration of the applicant’s health or functioning abilities that may result in premature admission to institutional care, hospitalisation or dependence on more costly services.
- Not making the assistive technology available will place excessive demand on carers in caring for the person and seriously jeopardise the current care/living arrangements.

## **‘Low urgency’ category**

Assistive technology will be supplied subject to the availability of funds. The category applies where a reissue item has not been identified and according to the priority of the application considering:

- clinical factors indicated by the applicant’s assistive technology practitioner
- the length of the waiting period experienced by the applicant.

## **Gap funding**

‘Gap funding’ is the term used to describe the difference between the maximum subsidy and the actual cost of the assistive technology or vehicle/home modification.

Once an applicant advises SWEP that they have sourced the gap funding, their application will be assessed using the priority of access framework.

## **Additional information**

There is high demand on the VA&EP and there can be wait times to allocate a subsidy where a reissue item is not available.

Applicants are encouraged to speak to their assistive technology practitioner about accessing re-issued items. These can often be provided quickly and at no cost to the applicant.

# Role and responsibility of applicants applying to access supports from the VA&EP

Applicants are responsible for paying the cost of the assessment required as part of the application process where an assistive technology practitioner charges a fee for the assessment service.

Applicants are also responsible for accepting the terms and conditions of the supply of the recommended assistive technology. This includes:

- accepting a re-issue item that will meet their assessed needs
- funding the difference between the cost of the assistive technology and the VA&EP maximum subsidy for that item (gap funding)
- refraining from making modifications or repairs to the VA&EP service provider-owned assets
- generally up keeping, caring for and cleaning the asset, and replacing wheelchair and scooter tyres and tubes
- agreeing, as applicable, to having the equipment technically assessed for preventative maintenance checks, including annual electrical safety and weight-bearing capacity checks on assets owned by the VA&EP service provider
- contacting the service provider to report faults or repairs required as soon as possible
- not putting any member of the public at risk through inappropriately or negligently using the VA&EP assistive technology
- advising their assistive technology practitioner of any change in their physical, cognitive or psychological condition or change of accommodation that could affect the safe use of the VA&EP-provided assistive technology
- agreeing to organise, where relevant, a review of their capacity for safe use of the assistive technology provided under the VA&EP
- agreeing to a new assessment and any recommendations made by an assistive technology practitioner, including agreeing to the relinquishment of the VA&EP service provider owned assistive technology when it has been determined that this change places the person and/or members of the public at risk through operating the item in a potentially unsafe way
- considering taking out insurance for the assistive technology where appropriate – for example, insurance for third-party damage, fire and theft for a wheelchair or scooter
- understanding their rights and responsibilities within the Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights
- advising the service provider of any change to their eligibility status to access support through the VA&EP. This includes:
  - becoming an NDIS participant or recipient of other government schemes that fund assistive technology
  - becoming a recipient of a Commonwealth Government Home Care Package or entering residential aged care
  - receiving compensation for assistive technology from any other source
  - moving interstate or overseas.

## Change of eligibility status of existing VA&EP clients

When a VA&EP client receives compensation from any source for assistive technology funded through the VA&EP, they will be required to repay the cost of the assistive technology. This applies to subsidies or equipment provided by SWEP (see the 'Applicant declaration' available at <https://swep.bhs.org.au/other-relevant-documents.php>)

When a client moves interstate or overseas they can continue to use the assistive technology supplied (except for domiciliary oxygen), but the VA&EP will no longer meet the cost of repairs and replacement.

Where clients relocate interstate, under the inter-government agreements between the states and territories, the client should be referred to the relevant state assistive technology program for ongoing support. This is contingent on meeting any specific eligibility requirements of that state/territory.

Clients of the VA&EP who move into residential aged care can keep using the assistive technology until it is no longer appropriate for their needs. The assistive technology should then be returned to the service provider that supplied it. The VA&EP will no longer meet the cost of replacement because the residential aged care service provider is expected to meet the assistive technology needs of their residents. The VA&EP will continue to maintain the assistive technology until it is deemed no longer viable to do so.

# The application process

The VA&EP relies on the support of health professionals to deliver an efficient client-centred program.

Health professionals registered to practice with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency or other professional/regulatory bodies certify the applicant has a permanent need for the assistive technology.

The Assistive Technology practitioner undertakes the assessments of an applicant's clinical need and, in conjunction with the applicant, prescribes the most appropriate, assistive technology available through the VA&EP. This includes:

- assisting the applicant to understand the eligibility criteria
- providing information about the Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights
- establishing the applicant and/or their carer have the cognitive, physical and psychological ability to operate the assistive technology safely
- not prescribing assistive technology that represents a restrictive restraint as outlined in the *Disability Act 2006*
- ensuring there is no suitable re-issued assistive technology item available that will meet the applicant's needs before recommending to supply a new item
- ensuring training is provided to the applicant/carer to use their assistive technology safely.
- ensuring the applicant is aware of any future reassessment requirements.

More detailed information on the application and submission requirements is available on the funded service provider's websites.

## Assessing the application and approval

The service provider confirms the applicant's eligibility and acknowledges all applications in writing within 10 working days of receiving the completed application.

The service provider advises the applicant:

- of the status of their application
- when the subsidy is available
- arranges supply
- when an item has been deemed financially unviable for any further repairs and that a new application needs to be submitted to replace the item.

# Information about items

## Ownership

The service provider, (SWEP) retains ownership of the assistive technology when the subsidy is more than 50 per cent of the cost of the item.

Assistive technology items owned by the service provider that can be re-issued are provided on a long-term loan basis except in the case of:

- home modifications
- vehicle modifications
- transfer aids such as ceiling hoist tracking and stair lifts, including tracking that is attached to a wall
- personal use items such as wigs, orthoses/shoes, lymphoedema garments and voice aids, and low-cost items such as over-toilet frames and bath seats.

The applicant can retain ownership of any asset where they contribute more than 50 per cent of the full cost of an item.

As the owner of the item, the applicant is responsible for the cost of ongoing repairs, preventative maintenance and the annual electrical safety check (if applicable).

In instances where an applicant wishes to own the item but the subsidy covers the full cost, the applicant must contribute more than 50 per cent of the full cost. The VA&EP will subsidise the remaining cost.

Please refer to the other service providers for additional information for example MND Victoria loans equipment for as long as the person requires the equipment.

## Repairs, maintenance and replacement

The VA&EP service provider will fund necessary repairs on items it owns, this includes orthoses and items on loan to clients. It is the responsibility of the client to advise their VA&EP service provider of the need to undertake a repair or to contact their Assistive Technology practitioner to discuss the on-going suitability of the issued item.

If neglect (unusual wear and tear) or misuse of an item is established, the VA&EP will not be responsible for repairs.

Requests for repairs to VA&EP service provider owned assets are prioritised in light of the person's safety, the availability of back-up equipment and, if applicable, their carer using the Priority of Access Framework.

If faulty equipment is likely to cause serious danger, the VA&EP service provider will report it to the supplier. In the case of equipment that is defective, unsafe or fails to meet prescribed construction, performance and design standards, these will be reported to Consumer Affairs Victoria.

Where a manufacturer recommends replacing equipment or an item after a period of time (for example, five years), the service provider will arrange a comprehensive assessment of the equipment/item to establish:

- if the equipment/item is operating safely
- the general condition of the equipment/item
- if it is financially viable to continue to fund repairs.



In instances where the assistive technology meets any of these criteria, the service provider may not replace the equipment/item.

Replacement items may be supplied subject to any time limits thresholds specified in the 'Availability and supply' section when:

- the assistive technology no longer meets the functional needs of the client or is no longer useable
- it is more economical to replace the assistive technology than to pay for further repairs
- a client's situation or condition has changed and replacing the current assistive technology is clinically justified
- a wheelchair/scooter supplied through the VA&EP was stolen or intentionally irreparably damaged by an unknown perpetrator and the client does not have insurance cover.

An application to replace the assistive technology should be submitted to the VA&EP service provider if applicable.

### **Write-off and disposal of items with an asset number**

The service provider must determine the financial viability of an asset including the cost of repairs, retrieval, safety requirements, potential to reissue and use of suitable parts.

In cases where the service provider deems that the item is no longer viable, the service provider should document the asset write-off.

Where a client wishes to keep assistive technology that has been deemed unviable and written off, ownership of the assistive technology is transferred to the client. The client is then responsible for arranging and paying for all future repairs or maintenance on the item.

## **Availability and supply**

Products available through the VA&EP conform to one or more of the following requirements:

- relevant Australian Standards or International Standard (if applicable)
- Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) registration (class 1 medical devices) (if applicable).

The quality (service and durability) of assistive technology is balanced against cost, representing value for money that includes (but is not limited to):

- delivery and set-up
- training
- warranty
- availability of spare parts.

Although cost is a consideration, the primary consideration is the client's safety. For example, beds and mattress combinations undergo additional scrutiny to ensure there are no possible entrapment areas before being put on the list of available items.

Procurement strategies are undertaken to maximise the purchasing power of the VA&EP service provider within the supply market where possible to demonstrate 'value for money'.

Australian-made assistive technology are the preferred products.

The tables in the following section identify the assistive technology that can be supplied through the VA&EP and any additional eligibility requirements.

# Aids and equipment programs administered by SWEPE

SWEPE has developed several guides and assistive technology practitioner manuals that provide additional information about factors for consideration during assessment, the application processes and the types of items available under each category. These can be accessed from the [SWEPE website](http://swep.bhs.org.au/prescribers/prescription-forms-and-manuals) <<http://swep.bhs.org.au/prescribers/prescription-forms-and-manuals>>.

## Beds, pressure-reducing mattresses and accessories

Available items	Maximum subsidy	Practitioner qualification
<b>Beds</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Powered (minimum of three functions)</li> <li>Standard</li> <li>Customised</li> <li>Bariatric</li> </ul>	\$2,000	Current general AHPRA registration as an Occupational Therapist. <b>OR</b> Current general AHPRA registration as a Physiotherapist.
<b>Pressure-reducing devices</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pressure-reducing mattress</li> <li>Wedges</li> </ul>	\$1,070 (The maximum subsidy for pressure-reducing items is \$1,070 every two years across all equipment categories)	
<b>Accessories</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Self-help pole / bed blocks / bed raisers</li> <li>Bed rails / bed rail covers</li> </ul>	\$200 (per item/set)	

## Continence aids

Available items	Maximum subsidy	Practitioner qualification
<b>Disposable continence products</b> Intermittent catheters, long-term catheters and associated equipment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>catheter straps, drainage bags, bottles, tubing, connectors and straps</li> </ul> Condom drainage systems and associated equipment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>straps, tubing, connectors, valves, bottles, bags, holders</li> </ul> <b>Specialised</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intra-vaginal bladder supports</li> <li>Anal irrigation system and accessories</li> <li>Anal plugs</li> </ul> <b>Washables</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mattress protectors</li> <li>Bed pads</li> </ul>	\$1,200 per year  As per recommended quantities	Current general AHPRA registration as a Registered Nurse <b>with</b> Graduate certificate in Nursing (urological and continence) or equivalent <b>OR</b> employed in a relevant specialty context relating to bladder or bowel dysfunction (e.g. Nurse Continence Specialist/ Continence Nurse Advisor / Urology Nurse/ Clinical Nurse Consultant (in a related context))

Available items	Maximum subsidy	Practitioner qualification
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pillow protectors</li> <li>Doona covers</li> <li>Chair pads</li> <li>Floor mats</li> <li>Washable briefs/pads</li> </ul>		<b>OR</b> if endorsed as a Nurse Practitioner, applying advanced clinical nursing practice in a relevant specialty context.

## Additional information

The VA&EP will:

- not fund disposable continence pants or pads or any other item not listed in the table above
- fund washable products as a one-off order only (in exceptional circumstances additional items may be supplied where a recommendation is received from a SWEP-registered practitioner who can provide clinical justification for the need for additional washable items)
- continue to supply non-washable continence aids in an ongoing manner after the first episode of supply in compliance with the recommended biannual clinical review.

**Note:** Clients accessing continence products from SWEP may also be able to access supports from other programs such as the Commonwealth Government's Continence Aids Payment Scheme. For further information visit the [Australian Government Continence Aids Payment Scheme website](https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/medicare/continence-aids-payment-scheme) <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/medicare/continence-aids-payment-scheme>.

## Environmental control units

Available items	Maximum subsidy	Practitioner qualification
Single function control Multi-function standard controls Multi-function complex controls	\$3,000	Current general AHPRA registration as an Occupational Therapist.
When the environmental control unit is included in an electronic communication device	\$2,300	

## Specialised bathing and toileting

Available items	Maximum subsidy	Practitioner qualification
Shower stools and chairs, bath seats, over-toilet frames, toilet surrounds, toilet seat raisers and extensions	\$80	Current general AHPRA registration as an Occupational Therapist. <b>OR</b> Current general AHPRA registration as a Physiotherapist.
Specialised paediatric hygiene equipment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>potty chairs</li> <li>in-bath seats</li> </ul>	\$500	
Fixed commode	\$200	
Mobile shower commode <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>modifications</li> <li>pressure-reducing components</li> </ul>	\$1,000 \$500 \$1,070	
Change table (Supported Accommodation Equipment Assistance Scheme consumers only)	\$2,000	
Shower trolley	\$1,000	
Complex and customised showering/bathing/toileting	\$1,000	

## Additional information

The maximum subsidy for pressure-reducing devices is \$1,070 every two years across all equipment categories.

## Orthoses

Available items	Maximum subsidy	Practitioner qualification
Knee-ankle-foot orthosis	\$2,200 per item	Current general AHPRA registration as an Occupational Therapist. <b>OR</b> Current general AHPRA registration as a Physiotherapist <b>OR</b> Current general AHPRA registration as a Podiatrist <b>OR</b> Orthotist/Prosthetist with full membership of the Australian Orthotics and Prosthetics Association.
Basic lower limb; ankle, foot; knee and foot	\$1,200 per item	
Basic upper limb; wrist, hand; elbow; combined, static and functional		
Basic spinal; lumbo-sacral or thoraco-lumbo-sacral		
Charcot restraint orthotic walker		
Dynamic upper limb orthoses		
Dynamic ankle foot orthosis		
Ground reaction force		
Supra-malleolar orthosis		
Stance phase control devices		
Reciprocating gait orthosis		\$200
Brachial plexus devices		
Boots and bars		
Customer made hernia orthosis		
Foot orthosis		
Shoe modifications	\$200 per pair	
Extra depth/width	\$200 per pair	
Custom made footwear	\$450 per year	
Fitting fee	\$75	
Safety helmet (specialised/custom made)	\$200	

## Additional information

The VA&EP will fund:

- an orthosis that is custom made to modify the structural or functional characteristics of an applicant's limb
- one item per limb (where an assistive technology practitioner requests more than one item for the same limb, the practitioner must confirm that each item is integral for the functionality of the other for the request to be considered)
- one replacement of footwear will be supplied after a minimum of 12 months, or six months in the case of a person under 18 years of age.
- **a once-off fitting fee where the device is fitted to the consumer by the supplier.**

The VA&EP will not:

- provide a shoe modifications subsidy in conjunction with custom-made footwear
- fund over-the-counter aids such as; shoes; foam bands (tubular sponge protective devices) insoles/build-ups; wrist, ankle, knee braces/splints; back/hernia support or cervical collars.

## Wheelchairs and mobility scooters

Available items	Maximum subsidy	Practitioner qualification
Manual wheelchair (≥ 15 kg)	\$1,000	Current general AHPRA registration as an Occupational Therapist. <b>OR</b> Current general AHPRA registration as a Physiotherapist
Lightweight manual wheelchair/stroller (< 15 kg)	\$1,250	
Powered wheelchair	\$6,000	
Power assist	\$5,000	
Mobility scooter	\$4,000	
Customisation of strollers, manual and powered wheelchairs	\$2,750	
Pressure cushions including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>adjustable/contoured/moulded or combinations</li> <li>wedges/blocks or obliquity</li> <li>moulded or matrix seating systems</li> <li>removable additions to cushions</li> </ul>	\$1,070	

### Additional Information

SWEP may require additional specialist assessments to help establish the capacity of the applicant to safely and effectively use a powered wheelchair or scooter. For example, an applicant who has a vision impairment requires a recent ophthalmologist or optometrist assessments specifically relating to the ability to safely operate a wheelchair or scooter.

The AT practitioner will be responsible for ensuring the applicant can use the selected wheelchair or scooter safely in a range of environments including the applicant's place of residency and their local community.

The applicant is also responsible for organising, a mandatory, at minimum every two years, review of their capacity to safe use the wheelchair or scooter provider under the VA&EP.

The state speed limit for wheelchairs and scooters is 10 kilometres per hour. SWEP will only purchase items that do not exceed this limit.

Wheelchair customising includes additional specialised and necessary items such as adapting brakes, specialised forms of seating, heel cups and elevating leg rests.

The VA&EP does not fund wheelchair/scooter accessories such as baskets.

The maximum subsidy for pressure-reducing devices is \$1,070 every two years across all equipment categories.

Supply guidelines:

- One primary (main), manual or powered wheelchair or mobility scooter may be supplied to eligible applicants.
- One back-up manual or powered wheelchair or mobility scooter may be supplied **from reissue stock**, if it is available and not required as a primary item for current applicants.
- The **replacement** of a manual or powered wheelchair or mobility scooter will be considered after a **minimum of seven years or subject to reassessment**.

## Specialised seating

Available items	Maximum subsidy	Practitioner qualification
Basic specialised seating with or without adjustable legs/armrests/seat depth including low- and high-back chairs and adjustable kitchen stools and indoor base for seating systems	\$500	Current general AHPRA registration as an Occupational Therapist. <b>OR</b> Current general AHPRA registration as a Physiotherapist.
Specialised seating with in-built pressure reducing device	\$1,070	
Powered lift recliner chair	\$1,000	
Chair raisers	\$200	
Disability specific car seat (VicRoads-approved) for children	\$850	
Swivel bases for disability specific car seat (VicRoads-approved)	\$500	

### Additional information

The maximum subsidy for pressure-reducing items is \$1,070 every two years across all equipment categories.

## Walking aids

Available items	Maximum subsidy	Practitioner qualification
Walking frames <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>pick-up frame</li> <li>posterior walker</li> <li>wheeled walker</li> </ul>	\$300	Current general AHPRA registration as an Occupational Therapist. <b>OR</b> Current general AHPRA registration as a Physiotherapist.
Standing frames: prone or supine	\$550	

## Transfer equipment

Available items	Maximum subsidy	Practitioner qualification
Basic transfer equipment – slide boards, slide sheets, rotating seats, turn tables, transfer belts and transfer benches	\$200	Current general AHPRA registration as an Occupational Therapist. <b>OR</b> Current general AHPRA registration as a Physiotherapist.
Mobile floor hoist (includes up to two slings)	\$2,600	
Ceiling hoist (fixed or portable, includes up to two slings)	\$3,300	
Ceiling tracking	\$300	
Replacement hoist sling	\$300	
Kitchen trolley	\$135	
Portable ramps	\$400	

### Additional information

Limit of one hoist per client.

Supported Accommodation Equipment Assistance Scheme consumers are not eligible for funding towards ceiling track & ceiling hoists

## Wigs

Available items	Maximum subsidy	Practitioner qualification
Two basic synthetic wigs (or equivalent contribution towards human hair wig, or more expensive synthetic wig up to the subsidy cost)	\$240	Supplier and/or client
One human hair wig (child 16 years or younger)	\$600	

### Additional information

The wig subsidy may be provided to people with permanent loss of hair because of disease or disability.

Replacement wigs will be available after two years.

## Home modifications

Available items	Maximum subsidy	Practitioner qualification
<p><b>Minor home modifications scoped to cost ≤ \$1,300 including:</b> rails; door fittings; hand-held showers and switchcocks; threshold ramps; single steps or platform modification; removal of shower screen, widening of doors, repositioning of light switches; taps (lever style); slip-resistant applications; shelving for wheelchair access and bidets – toilet type attachment.</p> <p><b>Home modifications scoped to cost &gt; \$1,300 and &lt;\$10,000 including:</b> ramps or step modifications for two or more steps including platform steps to one existing access point to the dwelling; bathrooms; kitchen and laundry; repositioning of items related to disability and bidets separate to toilet.</p> <p>* Ramps not compliant with Australian Standard 1428.1</p> <p><b>Home modifications scoped to exceed \$10,000 including:</b> ramps; step modifications to one existing access point to the dwelling; bathrooms; kitchen and laundry.</p> <p>Internal and external stair lifts.</p>	\$4,000 per person per lifetime.	Current general AHPRA registration as an Occupational Therapist.

### Additional information

Although the VA&EP is not able to fund non-disability-specific household items, for example standard shower screens, shower bases with steps and toilet, however, the VA&EP may fund the repositioning of a non-disability-specific household item if related to the applicant's disability.

The VA&EP will fund the gap between a standard household item and a disability-specific item in new homes or homes under construction up to the available subsidy.

VA&EP will not fund pathways and driveways.

People living in residential services and accommodation services owned or operated by non-profit organisations, businesses, trust funds or any other type of organisations are not eligible to apply for funding for home modifications.

The VA&EP is not able to fund the cost of general home maintenance.

Please refer to the guidelines available at the SWEP homepage for additional information on the [home modification application process](https://swep.bhs.org.au/home-modifications.php) <https://swep.bhs.org.au/home-modifications.php>. The site includes information for applicants, assistive technology practitioners and builders.

**Note:** The cost of removing **asbestos** is the responsibility of the property owner.

## Vehicle Modification Subsidy Scheme (VMSS)

Available items	Maximum subsidy	Practitioner qualification
<p><b>Passenger modifications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transfer and access modifications</li> <li>• Roof hoists</li> <li>• Trailers and wheelchair carriers</li> <li>• Lowered floor modifications</li> <li>• Seating modifications</li> <li>• Seatbelts</li> <li>• Power-operated tailgate</li> <li>• Boot crane</li> <li>• Client and/or wheelchair lift</li> </ul> <p><b>Other</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Air conditioning (related to disability)</li> <li>• Oxygen cylinder restraint systems</li> <li>• Wheelchair restraint systems</li> <li>• Contribution to existing modification in a second-hand (already modified) vehicle</li> </ul>	<p>\$10,000, per person, over a seven-year period</p>	<p>Current general AHPRA registration as an Occupational Therapist.</p>
<p><b>Driver modifications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accelerator modification</li> <li>• Brake and hand control</li> </ul>		<p>Current general registration as an Occupational Therapist</p> <p><b>with</b> Post-graduate training in driver assessment and rehabilitation, with both theory and practicum delivered in line with the <i>Australian Competency Standards for Occupational Therapy Driver Assessors</i>. OTA (2018).</p>

### Additional information

To be eligible for a subsidy through the VMSS, applicants:

- require modifications to a primary (main) vehicle that is owned by the applicant or their family to enable travel
- may be required to undertake assessment by a VicRoads-accredited occupational therapist driver assessor (for driver related modifications).

Vehicle modifications are available to assist eligible people to travel as either a passenger or a driver. If the primary vehicle is unable to be modified, in some circumstances applicants may apply for a subsidy towards the modification component of an already modified second-hand vehicle. Restrictions to this occur where the modification is not transferrable to another vehicle.

The subsidy is not available:



- where the vehicle is more than 10 years old and/or has more than 160,000 kilometres on the odometer, or
  - for modifications that do not comply with Australian Design Rules or would not comply with VicRoads Standards for Registration (refer to VicRoads publication, *Vehicle Standards Information 8 'Guide to modifications to motor vehicles'* <<https://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/safety-and-road-rules/vehicle-safety/vehicle-standards-information>>).

In exceptional circumstance applications from clients with vehicles older than 10 years may be considered by the VMSS service provider where the modification is fully removable and transferrable to another vehicle.

A VMSS subsidy is not available as a contribution towards the cost of:

- the vehicle
- non-disability-specific items such as rear-vision cameras, rear-parking sensors, global positioning system devices, mirrors and cruise control
- vehicle running costs, statutory charges or insurance premiums
- modifications to vehicles owned by organisations.

## Lymphoedema Compression Garment Program

Available items	Maximum subsidy	Practitioner qualification
Up to six compression garments per year (where more than one item for the same limb is requested, the practitioner must confirm that each item is integral for the functionality of the other for the request to count as “one item”)	Depends on the applicant’s assessable income	Current general AHPRA registration as an Occupational Therapist <b>OR</b> Physiotherapist <b>OR</b> Registered Nurse <b>OR</b> Nurse Practitioner <b>OR</b> Medical Practitioner <b>with</b> Completion of a Level 1 Australasian Lymphology Association (ALA) endorsed course (upper and/or lower limb) consistent with your role and chosen scope of practice

### Additional Information

Up to six compression garments are available to people who:

- have been medically assessed as having either primary or secondary lymphoedema
- meet the eligibility criteria for the VA&EP
- are currently receiving a Centrelink pension or are assessed as being a low- or medium-income earner.

Applicants must meet **all** the above criteria and approval is subject to completing an:

- application for financial assistance
- declaration of income for LCGP funding.

Clients who are assessed as eligible may apply for funding as outlined below.

The LCGP subsidy covers between 40 and 60 per cent of the cost of the prescribed compression garment as per follows:

Income level	Under \$200	Between \$200 and \$400	\$400 and above
Medium	40%	40%	40%
Low	40%	50%	60%

Income levels are based the Centrelink definition see

<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/low-income-health-care-card/who-can-get-card/income-test>

Replacement garments will be supplied at intervals of two garments per three to four months, as agreed by the lymphoedema clinician.

## Laryngectomy Program

Available items	Maximum subsidy	Practitioner qualification
Electrolarynx voice aids	\$1,500 per five years	Speech Pathologist eligible for membership of Speech Pathology Australia
Voice prosthesis <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• standard</li><li>• specialised</li></ul>	\$450 maximum subsidy per voice prosthesis – up to a maximum of three per year	
Laryngectomy consumables	\$5,000 per annum	

### Additional information

In addition to meeting the VA&EP eligibility criteria to access laryngectomy consumables, an applicant must:

- have undergone a recent surgical procedure for a laryngectomy, and completed an appropriate trial of consumable products/items (for a minimum 30 days post discharge), or
- be able to provide evidence of current use of self-funded consumables, or
- have not previously used laryngectomy consumables due to lack of affordability.

See the SWEP website for more information on the type of [consumable products that will be funded](https://swep.bhs.org.au/laryngectomy-consumables-program.php) <https://swep.bhs.org.au/laryngectomy-consumables-program.php> through the VA&EP.

## Domiciliary Oxygen Program

Available items	Maximum subsidy	Practitioner qualification
Stationary oxygen concentrators Portable oxygen cylinders with an oxygen-conserving device or standard regulator Portable oxygen concentrators Tubing and nasal cannulae Oxygen cylinder trolleys and carry bags	\$2,400 per annum	<p><b>Adult:</b>            Specialist respiratory and sleep medicine physician  <b>OR</b>            Specialist palliative medicine physician  <b>OR</b>            Specialist medical oncologist  <b>OR</b>            Specialist cardiologist  <b>OR</b>            Specialist general physician (with respiratory interest)</p> <p><b>Child:</b>            Specialist paediatric respiratory and sleep medicine physician  <b>OR</b>            Specialist paediatrician / Specialist neonatologist  <b>OR</b>            Specialist paediatric palliative medicine physician  <b>OR</b>            Specialist medical paediatric oncologist  <b>OR</b>            Specialist paediatric cardiologist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (all as determined by AHPRA).</li> </ul>

### Additional information

To be eligible for subsidised oxygen through the Domiciliary Oxygen Program, the applicant's clinical test results must meet the Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand's (TSANZ) guidelines for domiciliary oxygen provision.

For more information about adult eligibility, see the Thoracic Society of Australia's [Adult domiciliary oxygen therapy position statement](https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2005/182/12/adult-domiciliary-oxygen-therapy-position-statement-thoracic-society-australia) <https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2005/182/12/adult-domiciliary-oxygen-therapy-position-statement-thoracic-society-australia> or TSANZ's [Adult domiciliary oxygen therapy clinical practice guideline](http://www.thoracic.org.au/journal-publishing/command/download_file/id/33/filename/TSANZ-DomiciliaryOxygen-Guidelines-2016-web.pdf) <http://www.thoracic.org.au/journal-publishing/command/download\_file/id/33/filename/TSANZ-DomiciliaryOxygen-Guidelines-2016-web.pdf>.

For more information about assessing children see the TSANZ's position paper [for infants with chronic neonatal lung disease: recommendations for home oxygen therapy](https://www.thoracic.org.au/journal-publishing/categories?id=6) <https://www.thoracic.org.au/journal-publishing/categories?id=6>. This position paper is used to determine eligibility and the type and quantity of product to be supplied up to the maximum subsidy.

An annual review is required to determine ongoing eligibility and to check the current prescription meets the client's clinical needs. Repeat testing is at the discretion of the credentialed medical practitioner and can include exercise testing, arterial blood gases and/or lung function testing.

Children can be assessed using pulse oximetry, rather than via a full assessment.

SWEP should notify the client one month before the annual review is required.

Oxygen usage will be monitored by SWEP. When it does not appear to be in line with the prescription, it will be investigated and referred to the client's credentialed medical practitioner.

Back-up cylinders may be supplied in special circumstances such as in localities where frequent power outages occur. Contact SWEP for more information.

Clients are responsible for ensuring free-standing cylinders are stored safely.

## **Exclusions**

Domiciliary oxygen is not available for occasional use, or for use with nebulisers, suctioning equipment or for occasional exacerbations of asthma.

Domiciliary oxygen will **not** be supplied to anyone who is a current smoker or who has resumed active smoking once approved for domiciliary oxygen. The risk of incineration while smoking and simultaneously using oxygen is very high and cannot be accepted by either SWEP or the supplier.

If a client who is receiving subsidised oxygen is found to be smoking, both they and their credentialed medical practitioner will be notified of their subsidised oxygen supplies being immediately terminated. The supplier will be instructed to withdraw the equipment, notwithstanding the severity of the client's underlying medical condition.

Funding and oxygen supplies will only recommence once the client can demonstrate that they have completely abstained from tobacco smoking for at least six weeks.

# Other schemes and programs under the VA&EP

## Electronic Communication Devices Scheme administered by Yooralla

Available items	Maximum subsidy	Practitioner qualification
Speech-generating devices Speech-generating software and applications (apps) Voice amplifiers External speakers	\$7,000	Registered speech pathologist

### Additional information

An occupational therapist report is also required if the communication aid user is unable to directly access the electronic communication device or requires a mounting system.

Residents of residential aged care facilities are eligible to apply.

Communication aid users with equipment that is five years old or no longer meets their needs may apply for a [review of their device](https://www.yooralla.com.au/services/communication-and-assistive-technology/electronic-communication-devices-scheme) <<https://www.yooralla.com.au/services/communication-and-assistive-technology/electronic-communication-devices-scheme>>.

## Smoke Alarm Scheme administered by Expression Australia

In addition to meeting the VA&EP eligibility criteria to access the Smoke Alarm Scheme, the applicant must be profoundly/severely deaf with an assessed hearing loss of 80 dB or more in both ears across the frequencies from 500 Hz, 1,000 Hz, 2,000 Hz and 4,000 Hz when tested by an audiologist or have a cochlear implant.

Visit the Expressions Australia website for [more information on the scheme](http://www.expression.com.au/content.asp?id=31&t=smoke-alarm-subsidy&cid=81#elig) <<http://www.expression.com.au/content.asp?id=31&t=smoke-alarm-subsidy&cid=81#elig>>.

## Individual Solutions for Individual Needs (Solve)

Visit Solve's website for [more information on the scheme](https://www.solve.org.au/our-service/what-does-solve-do) <<https://www.solve.org.au/our-service/what-does-solve-do>>.

## Low Cost Vision Aids Scheme administered by Vision Australia Foundation

Visit the Vision Australia Foundation website for more information on the [range of products](https://visionaustralia.org/referral/benefits-and-funding/technology#stateterritory) <<https://visionaustralia.org/referral/benefits-and-funding/technology#stateterritory>> that can be accessed through the scheme.

## Equipment library administered by MND Victoria

Visit the MND Victoria website for more information on the [range of products](https://www.mnd.asn.au/our-services/equipment) <<https://www.mnd.asn.au/our-services/equipment>> that can be accessed through the scheme.