

HOME MODIFICATIONS INFORMATION FOR CONSUMERS

What is SWEP?

The State-wide Equipment Program (SWEP) is a sub-division of Grampians Health (GH) which oversees a number of different assistive technology programs.

SWEP provides Victorian people who either have a permanent or long-term disability or are frail aged with subsidised Assistive Technology (AT) items and home and vehicle modifications to enhance their independence and facilitate community participation.

Program aim

The Victorian Aids and Equipment Program (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.

Where does the funding come from?

SWEP is funded by the Department of Health (DH). Subsidised funding towards the cost of home modifications is available through the VA&EP.

To remain eligible for funding:

You must:

- have a permanent or long term disability/or are frail aged; living independently in the community
- be a permanent Victorian resident **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 SWEP.

You may not be eligible for home modifications if:

- you are eligible to receive assistive technology supports from other government-funded programs including the NDIS, WorkSafe Victoria and/or the Transport Accident Commission
- you 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 your 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)
- you have received any form of compensation/legal settlements or court awards related to your disability. Note, in some circumstances, a person may be eligible to access the VA&EP once compensation/settlement funds have been fully expended.
- you are living in residential services and accommodation services owned or operated by non-profit organisations, businesses, trust funds or any other type of organisations.

Am I eligible for home modifications if I do not own my home?

Yes, for private rentals, as long as you can gain consent from the Property Owner(s), or their authorised agent for the home modifications to occur. The Property Owner will need to print their name, sign and date the plans/drawings and quotation(s) to consent for the proposed home modifications to proceed.

What is the maximum amount of funding I can receive?

If you are eligible for VA&EP home modifications the maximum lifetime subsidy available to you is \$4,000, which may include an additional \$400 if the Goods and Services Tax (GST) applies.

What happens if SWEP is unable to fund the entire cost of the home modifications?

In some situations, SWEP funding may not cover the total cost of the modifications that your Occupational Therapist (OT) has recommended. If you require additional funding you will need to fund this portion of the home modifications yourself or seek alternative funding.

The OT that is assisting you with the SWEP application may know of options for gap funding.

What are the SWEP options for home modifications?

SWEP can assist with funding towards assistive equipment and its installation for modifications to your existing home by a suitably qualified Builder/Tradesperson. SWEP can also assist with funding the supply of the assistive equipment and you arrange for its installation by a suitably qualified Builder/ Tradesperson.

Home modifications related to your disability may include modification to: bathrooms, kitchen and laundry; rails; specialised door fittings; hand-held showers and switchcocks; ramps; step modifications; widening of doors to facilitate wheelchair access; repositioning of light switches; lever taps; slip-resistant applications; shelving for wheelchair access; bidets (toilet type attachment and bidet thrones), internal and external stair lifts.

Can I use a Builder or Tradesperson of my choice to modify my home?

Yes, you can use a suitably qualified Builder/Tradesperson of your choice.

The suitably qualified Builder/Tradesperson will need to determine if the recommended works are considered structural or non-structural.

How do I know if my preferred Builder/Tradesperson is suitably qualified?

The Victorian Building Authority (VBA) is the regulator for Builders/Tradespersons in Victoria and will be able to provide advice about the qualifications and scope of works Builders/Tradespersons are able to undertake. The VBA's purpose is to promote building practices that protect the safety of you and the people who live with you or visit you in your home. You can contact the VBA on: Phone: 1300 815 127 or Website: <https://www.vba.vic.gov.au/>

When will I find out the actual costs of the home modifications?

You can obtain a quotation any time you wish from a suitably qualified Builder/Tradesperson.

However, we suggest that you obtain the required number of quotations closer to the time when the funding is made available, as this will be more accurate.

How many quotations do I need to get for the home modification?

Home Modifications less than \$10,000 requires 1 quote

Home Modifications over \$10,001 requires 2 quotes

How long will it take for SWEP to provide me with funding assistance?

SWEP assess all A&EP applications against the Priority of Access Guidelines, which can be found at:

[Other Relevant Documents | SWEP \(bhs.org.au\)](#) These guidelines enable SWEP to identify the order in which applications are funded, based on information provided by your OT about how urgently the modification is required.

If your circumstances or condition(s) change, please speak with your OT.

What SWEP will not fund:

- Costs associated with general home repairs/maintenance, for example: repairs to rotting floor, tiles falling off walls, loose hand rails, mould on ramps, asbestos (removal/testing), leaking taps, etc;
- Standard household fittings such as shower curtains/tracks, flooring, toilets, baths, showers with steps, vanity units, mirrors, fans, towel rails, or hot water services. SWEP may however, fund the repositioning of these items if related to the disability or clinical needs of the consumer;
- Concrete pathways and driveways;
- Costs associated with Occupational Therapist, Draftspersons, Architects, Engineers, Building Surveyors or Building Inspectors as well as costs associated with insurance/warranty provisions;
- Home modifications that you have already paid for or for works that have already begun prior to approval of a SWEP application;
- Emergency repairs to your home.

When do Builders or Tradespeople need to be registered with the Victorian Building Authority (VBA)?

- If the home modifications are over \$10,000.
- If they carry out re-blocking, re-stumping or demolishing work.
- If they carry out any building work that requires a permit, regardless of cost.
- If they provide more than one type of building work (such as plastering and painting) that costs more than \$10,000 (including labour & materials).
- A building company has to be registered with the VBA if they want to enter into a major domestic building contract in the company's name, or if they want their company to be named as the builder on a building permit for non-domestic work costing greater than \$10,000.
- If any structural work is undertaken, then the Builder/Tradesperson must be registered, regardless of the cost of the work, and you must ensure the Builder/Tradesperson has obtained a building permit.

When does the Property Owner(s) need to enter into a Major Domestic Building Contract?

When the total cost of the home modifications are over \$10,000, the VBA registered Builder/Tradesperson must enter into a Major Domestic Building Contract with the Property Owner(s) or their authorised agent.

The Builder/Tradesperson must have the appropriate class of domestic Builder registration— taking into account any limitations of the VBA registered Builder.

When does the Builder/Tradesperson have to provide the Property Owner(s) with a Domestic Building Insurance Certificate?

For work costing more than \$16,000, your Builder/Tradesperson must provide you with a current certificate of domestic building insurance for your modification before taking a deposit and starting work.

As the Property Owner, what happens if I am not happy with the work that the Builder or Tradesperson has done?

- SWEP's role in the process is to supply funding for home modifications. If you are not satisfied with the home modifications or believe that they are not what you agreed to, you are required to direct these concerns to the Builder/Tradesperson and your Occupational Therapist.
- If you cannot resolve your concern with the Builder/Tradesperson you can receive free advice and conciliation on domestic building disputes from the Domestic Building Dispute Resolution Victoria (DBDRV)) by telephoning 1300 557 559. The DBDRV is a service jointly delivered by Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) and the Victorian Building Authority.
- If you have any technical questions about the home modifications you can contact the Victorian Building Authority (VBA) by telephoning 1300 815 127.
- SWEP does not own the home modifications or have any ongoing responsibility and they become the property of the Home Owner(s). This means that you are responsible for any repairs or ongoing maintenance. This also applies to stair lifts and bidet attachments.
- SWEP has no obligation to remove the home modifications if they are no longer required.
- Before work starts, check with your home and contents policy Insurer that you are covered for the home modifications, as you may need extra cover.
- The home owner is responsible for the ongoing maintenance of the home modification unless alternate arrangements have been made with the consumer.

Listed below are some useful resources that may be able to assist you:

Domestic Building Dispute Resolution Victoria (DBDRV)

<https://www.dbdrv.vic.gov.au/>

Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV)

<https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/>

Victorian Building Authority (VBA)

<http://www.vba.vic.gov.au/>

CAV Building and Renovating:

<https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/housing/building-and-renovating/checklists>

VBA- What is Domestic Building work?

<https://www.vba.vic.gov.au/registration-and-licensing/building-practitioner-registration/domestic-builder/what-is-domestic-building-work>

<https://www.dbi.vmia.vic.gov.au/>

VBA- Preparing a major domestic building contract checklist

<https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/licensing-and-registration/builders-and-tradespeople/checklists/preparing-a-major-domestic-building-contract>

If you would like to receive an overview of all the services provided by SWEP, please refer to the SWEP Consumer page found here: <https://swep.bhs.org.au/swep-state-funded-consumers.php>

How do I provide feedback or make a complaint?

As one of our Consumers you are the focus of our efforts. Your feedback helps us know what we are doing well and where we need to improve.

If you have any comments, compliments, suggestions or concerns about any aspect of our service, please tell our staff.

Formal Feedback can be provided in the following ways:

Email us at swep@bhs.org.au

- Fill in a feedback form
- Write to us at: P.O. Box 1993, Bakery Hill, Vic 3354
- Call our Quality and Leadership Support Officer on 1300 PH SWEP (1300 747 937) or (03) 5333 8126
- If you require an interpreter, or have a hearing or speech impediment, we can assist by accessing the Victorian Telephone Interpreting & Translating Service or National Relay Service.

We take all complaints seriously and aim to resolve them quickly and fairly.

If you remain dissatisfied with our response, you can contact:

The Health Complaints Commissioner (HCC). The HCC responds to complaints about health services and the handling of health information in Victoria. Their service is free, confidential and impartial. To lodge a complaint with the HCC, fill out a complaint form at www.hcc.vic.gov.au or phone 1300 582 113 between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday to discuss your complaint.