

# SWEP e-NEWS

11<sup>th</sup> EDITION FOR CONSUMERS

December 2023



To use an interpreter over the telephone – Ph: 131 450

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Operations Director

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*The State-wide Equipment Program (SWEP) will close over the Christmas period from 4.30 p.m. on Friday, 22 December 2023 and re-open at 8.30 a.m. on Wednesday, 27 December 2023*



*We wish you a safe and happy festive season!  
Warmest regards and best wishes, SWEP Leadership & Staff*

## Welcome to the 11<sup>th</sup> Edition of SWEP e-News for Consumers

Hello everyone and welcome to the 11th Edition of our annual newsletter. On behalf of SWEP, thank you to our State funded Victorians; NDIS participants and private consumers, who we have had the privilege to support during 2023. This year, we have received more than 22,000 applications for support through our programs, with over 20,000 consumers supported.

Following non-recurrent funding grants received over the last two years, we have processed applications where all relevant documentation had been submitted straight to order. Increased demand in the second half of this year has meant that we have needed to re-commence triaging new applications in some of our State funded programs to ensure we allocate available funding to those most in need. Current inflation and CPI increases to pricing across equipment and products has also impacted on how far we can stretch our capped annual budget.

On a positive note, we were delighted to recently finalise a large re-branding project for a dedicated website and phone line for our NDIS participants and privately funded consumers, supported by the Safety Link Assist team. In addition, a second project is underway in relation to more streamlined application processes, which will save administrative time for Practitioners and our staff and allow more timely processing of applications to our service.



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This year, our programs will be closed on the public holidays only. During any closures you will still be able to contact our team for emergency repairs by phoning SWEP on 1300 747 937 and selecting 'Option 1'. If your query is not urgent, you can leave a message by selecting 'Option 2' and a member of our team will call you back when we return.

On behalf of the SWEP team, we hope that you have a lovely time over the festive season, in whatever traditional manner you celebrate.

**Jeni Burton**  
Operations Director – State-wide Equipment Program

## Our Programs

### Safety Link Assist

The commercial arm of our business has been in operation now for over 3 years, with primary focus on providing services to NDIS participants and those consumers who are not eligible for support through the State funded programs.

The Safety Link Assist team has welcomed two new team members this year, Marg and Carl, to support the ever-increasing demand for the services we offer through this program. We have also welcomed back Sheree from leave and Mel has transitioned across from Assistive Technology team.

This year our team has supported 991 NDIS participants and 426 privately funded consumers, with supply across the range of supports/products available. This has been supported by SWEP's many contracted suppliers.

### Our State funded Programs

This year our State funded programs have supported approx. 20,100 unique consumers with provision of over 80,000 individual pieces of equipment and/or products, repairs, or home/vehicle modifications. We received more than 22,400 applications for support (approx. 450 applications per week). We have also received more than 36,900 incoming telephone calls during the year (approx. 154 calls every day we are open, answering most calls within approx. 28 seconds).

#### 1. Lymphoedema Compression Garments Program (LCGP)

Since January 2023, SWEP have assisted approx. 2,900 eligible people with subsidised funding towards their compression garments. The team recently welcomed new team member, Eve.

Due to increasingly high demand for people seeking support through this program, we have undertaken consultation with key stakeholders including Cancer Council Victoria, Breast Cancer Network and the Australian Lymphology Association (ALA), to consider the best way we can equitably manage this program for the many people applying for support, within the constraints of our budget. This paper now sits with the Department of Health to consider future management/budget for this program.



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## 2. Domiciliary Oxygen Program (DOP)

The Domiciliary Oxygen Program currently supports over 3,500 people each year who require supplementary oxygen equipment including stationary oxygen concentrators and portable oxygen equipment. There is no wait for funding for eligible consumers to this program.

## 3. Laryngectomy Consumables Program (LCP)

Over the past twelve months, the LCP have provided funding assistance to 316 eligible consumers for voice aids, laryngectomy consumables, and voice prostheses. This crucial funding ensures that Victorian Laryngectomy patients can access everyday items they need. There is no wait for funding for eligible consumers to this program.

## 4. Continence Team (CA)

This year the Continence Program has supported more than 4,250 people in receiving continence products, placing over 19,900 purchase orders. Once accepted by the program, consumers receive ongoing support for their continence products up to a maximum \$ value each year.

## 5. Assistive Technology and Asset Management teams (AT)

The AT team continue to process a large volume of applications for an extensive range of equipment items, home, and vehicle modifications. In 2023 the team received and processed approx. 11,300 applications and placed more than 30,700 orders. We have recently welcomed new team members, Maria, Kim and Emma.

Throughout 2023, through our repairs and re-issue partnership with Chemtronics, we have facilitated approximately 2,500 repairs for both State funded consumers and NDIS Participants, as well as supplied more than 1,800 fully refurbished items of equipment through our extensive refurbished equipment pool.

Our Preventative Maintenance Program continues to provide ongoing maintenance to equipment, the goal being to improve reliability of equipment and consumer and/or carer safety, through annual check. This service has been provided to 1,175 consumers throughout the year, with servicing of over 1,680 pieces of equipment.

If you have any questions regarding any of the services we provide, please contact SWEP on 1300 747 937 or your Practitioner, regarding how we can support you.



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## Procurement

Our current Supplier contracts for continence and oxygen products are due to expire on 30 June 2024. In line with the Victorian Government procurement guidelines, we released a new Tender for both the continence and oxygen programs recently. We have recently completed Phase 1 of the Tender Evaluation process which assesses Supplier capability to meet our delivery, warranty & consumer support expectations; legislative compliance; as well as innovation and quality products.

We have commenced Phase 2 which involves assessing the quality of the products on offer from each Supplier, by clinical experts. This will ensure that our contracted produce range remains relevant to current technologies, includes the latest models, features, and ensures that our product range can meet the needs of the vast majority of people accessing our continence and oxygen programs. Phase 3 will commence in the New Year, which assesses equipment/product pricing, to ensure the contracts provide value for money.

## SWEP Out and About – Community Engagement Activities

SWEP remains committed to contributing/participating in engagement with external stakeholders and community groups, both in person and online. We also have a Consumer Reference Group, made up of five community members, who participate in regular meetings with our leadership team and provide feedback and advice from a consumer perspective.

If you would like us to attend a community group or online forum you are connected to, please do not hesitate to contact us by phone (1300 747 937) or email [swep@gh.org.au](mailto:swep@gh.org.au)



Our Operations Manager, Hana Hey with the support of Team Leader, Kerry Etchell, are responsible for our community engagement activities.

This year Hana and Kerry represented SWEP at several events including:

**April** - Developing Australian Communities, Disability Connection Expo – Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre

**May** - ATSA Independent Living Expo (attended by numerous SWEP staff and a Consumer Reference Group member)

**November** - Melbourne Disability Expo 2023 – Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre






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## Consumer Survey Results

Thank you to those people who were randomly selected to participate in our 2023 Annual Consumer Survey.







Your feedback (whether positive or negative) is extremely valuable and allows us to strive for continual service improvements, to enhance the consumer experience.



### 2023 Consumer satisfaction with SWEP

Annually we ask consumers, after they have received and used their Assistive Technology, to tell us how satisfied they are overall with their SWEP experience  
We have again exceeded our target of 90%, set by the Department of Health and achieved an overall satisfaction rate of 96%.

**Thank-you SWEP AT Practitioners** for helping to make this happen

					
<b>420</b> responses to 1,772 consumer experience surveys  Responses in all assistive technology categories	<b>96%</b>  overall satisfaction with the SWEP experience  That includes <b>SWEP staff, AT practitioners, suppliers, repair agents and service</b>	<b>97%</b>  overall satisfaction with <b>SWEP staff</b> in communications  We are timely, helpful, respectful, understood consumer needs and gave clear information	<b>95%</b>  overall satisfaction with <b>AT Practitioners</b>  You are; understanding consumer needs, providing options to meet needs and informing consumers about the process to access SWEP support	<b>96%</b>  overall satisfaction with the <b>equipment</b> and <b>suppliers</b>	<b>92%</b>  overall satisfaction with the equipment, service or modification having helped <b>consumers achieve their goals</b>

#### Recommendations

- Survey Platform – Consider affordable methods for survey distribution via online forums, following unsuccessful trial of Word document distribution by email.
- Marketing of SWEP – Improved promotion of SWEP to improve consumer understanding of available services
- Oxygen consumers – Review of frequency of communication with oxygen consumers who appear unfamiliar with SWEP's role in funding of oxygen equipment
- SWEP Forms – consider alternative methods for distribution/return/sign-off of correspondence/forms
- Ensure consumers are aware of the Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights

## Celebrating our People

The State-wide Equipment Program currently employs 38 people, in either a full-time or part-time capacity. Although our admin teams are extremely busy processing applications across the various program streams, on occasion we 'take a breath' to acknowledge the efforts/achievements of our team, along with the occasional morning tea to celebrate milestone birthdays.



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In November this year our Operations Director, Jeni Burton was acknowledged for more than 40 years of service to Grampians Health Ballarat, and acknowledged as a “Life Governor” in a presentation by the Grampians Health Executive and Board of Directors.

Two of staff members, Michelle and Merrin also received service awards for 10 and 15 years (respectively) of service to SWEP and Grampians Health.



Our Operations Manager, Hana Hey, who chose to represent SWEP at the Melbourne Disability Expo instead of celebrating her milestone birthday was appropriately surprised by her family at the event!





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## SWEP Feedback

As one of our consumers, clients, or NDIS Participants, 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 compliments, suggestions, or concerns about any aspect of our service please visit our website <https://swep.bhs.org.au/providing-feedback.php>

We would like to share with you a few positive stories received by our team throughout 2023 (de-identified).

*"In our "good news" part of OT meeting yesterday, our team reflected on how responsive and helpful the SWEP team have been over the past few months, particularly around helping to track down some high-spec re-issue equipment that has really made a difference in enabling our patients to live their best lives in their own homes. The OTs have really appreciated this valuable assistance from the SWEP team, and wanted to say thank you to you and the crew for the work that you are doing and how you go about it. Thank you!"*

*"I wanted to offer my sincere thanks to those who were involved in processing my recent replacement wig. The whole process was very quick and efficient. I think it took just over a week to apply and have things finalised. I am very grateful for this subsidy. My alopecia was chemo induced and permanent. Every little bit helps when I am faced with a lifetime of wig purchases. Well done for your efforts in making the process so simple and smooth."*

*"Wow, I would like to thank the person at SWEP who answered my call at 8:30 this morning. I also need to thank [technician] of Chemtronics again so soon for repairing my power wheelchair on 2 October so quickly. Here is midday and I am back on the footpath again. He is such a knowledgeable, helpful, and kind person, who knows how to reach out to his team for technical advice. Another wiring fault, the other motor this time. Fingers crossed, let's hope we have the cause of problem under control. So hard to fix these sorts of problems. I am so fortunate to have the good people at Chemtronics and SWEP to support me when these things happen. Thanks to everyone's help I was able to remain independent at home."*

*"Good morning, I was given an electric wheelchair through your organisation, I wish to thank you as this is a life changing item. For me as an amputee it has given me a sense of freedom that I thought I would never have again, thank you for this from both my wife and myself."*



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