

March 2015

SWEP Prescriber Communique

Vehicle Modification Subsidy Scheme

Japanese imported vehicles

The overarching Vehicle Modification Subsidy Scheme (VMSS) Guidelines state that modifications that do not comply with any relevant Australian standards including the Australian Design Rules (ADRs) or VicRoads standards for registration cannot be funded by the VMSS Program.

SWEP has been advised that there is a range of Japanese vehicles currently being imported into Australia that have been equipped with disability access features such as wheelchair restraint systems, wheelchair occupant restraints, ramps and hoists; some of which **do not** comply with the Australian standards.

Our understanding is that those vehicles that do not comply with Australian Standards may place the wheelchair occupant at risk because:

- The restraint systems have no proof of testing/load capacity and the position of these restraints is not compliant, potentially putting the chair user at risk of serious injury in a crash.
- The restraints cannot be overridden/undone if there is a loss of power, as may be the case in an accident or if there was a vehicle fire.
- Many of the labels for these modifications in these vehicles are written in Japanese and do not include evidence of the strength or weight limits, or of their testing regarding the maximum permissible loads for wheelchair restraint systems, ramps or hoists.

These will potentially place the wheelchair occupant at risk of serious injury or death in the event of an accident.

The vehicles in question are being imported into Australia under the Specialist and Enthusiasts Vehicle Scheme (SEVS) which only refers to compliance with the ADRs for vehicle construction. This does not in any way prove compliance of disability/wheelchair related equipment with Australian standards.

Proof of compliance with the Australian standards (AS/NZS 10542.1 AS/NZS 10542.2 and AS/NZS 3856.1 and AS/NZS 3856.2) **is required** for a wheelchair accessible vehicle fitted with wheelchair restraint systems, wheelchair occupant restraints, ramps and hoists.

Following advice from the Department of Human Services and VicRoads, SWEP will only contribute to the modification component of these vehicles when a copy of the Vehicle Assessment Signatory Scheme (VASS) engineering certificate, that confirms compliance with the relevant Australian standard, is provided. SWEP will also require photographic evidence ([Schedule B- Vehicle Modification Plan](#)) to support the statement of compliance on the VASS engineering certificate. All applications will be forwarded through to VMSS Clinical Advisors for clinical review.

SWEP CANNOT FUND WITHOUT THIS INFORMATION. If you wish to provide any feedback or have any questions about the communique, please contact the VMSS program on 1300 747 937 or swepcentralintake@bhs.org.au