

Aids & Equipment Program

Many amputees or their families may have obtained equipment through the Aids and Equipment Program (A&EP). A&EP is a state government program which provides assistance to the disabled and frail aged. It used to be known as the Program of Aids for Disabled People (PADP). The aim of the program is to help people live at home by providing the equipment needed to maintain their independence.

What does it fund?

Funding is available for equipment such as wheelchairs, walking frames, orthopaedic shoes, orthoses, communication devices and home modifications. The funding may not cover the whole cost of the equipment, so you may have to make a contribution. The scheme is not means tested, but you must meet certain criteria to be eligible. These include:

- For your initial application, a doctor must certify that your condition is permanent.
- You are not in a Commonwealth funded nursing home or Supported Residential Service.
- You are not eligible for DVA/TAC/workcover assistance.

Please also note that applications can take several months to be processed.

How do I get access to A&EP?

For many amputees their first contact with the program may come while still an inpatient at the rehabilitation hospital, when their occupational therapist may apply to A&EP for funding for changes to their home, for example to install a ramp for wheelchair access.

The A&EP is co-ordinated through various public hospitals around Melbourne. Your doctor, community health centre or other health professional will be able to help you apply.

Program review

A&EP is now being reviewed due to some dissatisfaction with it. Limbs4Life recently attended a forum organised by KPMG, on behalf of DHS, to find out users feedback about the A&EP program.

The forum

Representatives of disability groups met with KPMG to express their concerns with the program. Concerns raised included:

- Lengthy waiting times for equipment
- Difficulties getting equipment altered or maintained
- Poor follow up
- Difficulty accessing the program
- Lack of tailoring to personal needs
- General under-resourcing of the program

- Some forms of aid/equipment are not covered

The demand for the program is also increasing due to the ageing population and reduced supply of equipment from other sources. Some NGO's have stopped supplying equipment due to public liability concerns.

These concerns were noted and will be feedback to DHS. Limbs 4 Life is aware that while overall A&EP funding has increased, the amount that a person can receive for some items of equipment has not changed in many years. Rising costs have meant that this leaves many disabled people out of pocket. Given that many are on the pension it can be extremely difficult to pay for equipment essential to maintaining independence.

Limbs 4 Life is also concerned that, like other government programs, A&EP funding has not kept abreast of technological changes. This can mean that disabled people can be 'locked out' of potential improvements in their independence.

Limbs 4 Life calls on the State Government to increase resources to A&EP, and to make the service more responsive to the needs of amputees and other disabled people.

For further information visit www.dhs.vic.gov.au search 'Aids and Equipment program'



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