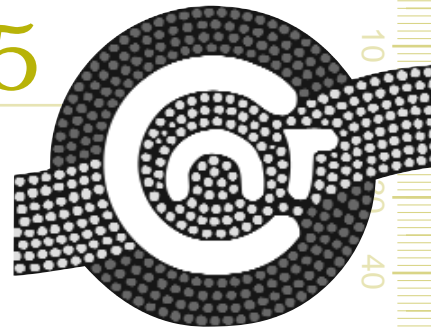


## How to get a wheelchair



Some people living in remote communities have trouble moving around, and may need to use a wheelchair or other mobility aid. The government provides wheelchairs, often on a long term loan basis, but only if people meet certain criteria. The process of getting a wheelchair is different in each State and Territory.

### HOW TO GET A WHEELCHAIR IN YOUR STATE/TERRITORY

#### Australian Capital Territory

**PROCESS:** The ACT Equipment Scheme offers funding to assist people with long term disabilities to live at home in the community, Ph. 02 6244 2580. To receive funding clients should:

- Be an ACT resident
- Have a permanent disability (minimum 2 years)
- Be ineligible to receive assistance from other government, private health schemes or compensation
- Meet financial criteria or receive a child disability allowance.

The Equipment scheme funds up to 90% of costs for adults and 20% for child equipment or up to 80% in some circumstances.

**MAINTENANCE:** The ACT Equipment scheme maintains mobility aids. They fund 2/3 of the cost, 1/3 is paid by the client.

**FIRST POINT OF CONTACT:** Assessments for a wheelchair can be made by the ILC 02 6205 1900 or by an occupational therapist, referred to by your GP. They will prescribe a suitable mobility aid and assist with funding applications.

#### New South Wales

**PROCESS:** The Program of Appliances for Disabled People (PADP) is a NSW Government program for people with disabilities and is administered locally from Lodgement Centres. You are eligible if you:

- Have a long term or permanent disability
- Are a permanent NSW resident
- Are unable to obtain equipment from other government programs
- Have not received compensation in respect of the disability
- Have been discharged from hospital for at least a month and are not eligible for the provision of equipment under a loan arrangement through a hospital.

All children under the age of 16 years are eligible for PADP regardless of their guardian's income. PADP Contacts: 06 4336 8823 or 06 4336 8820

**MAINTENANCE:** If the equipment requires repairs or maintenance to be carried out, you need to contact your PADP Lodgement Centre. They will arrange and fund repairs.

**FIRST POINT OF CONTACT:** The first point of contact should be your GP, who will refer you on to an occupational therapist, to decide on the appropriate equipment.

#### Northern Territory

**PROCESS:** In the Northern Territory, wheelchairs are funded under the Territory Independence and Mobility Equipment Scheme (TIMES). To be eligible for this scheme you need to be a recipient of either a Centrelink pension or be:

- The holder of aged persons pension
- The holder of disability support pension
- Under age of 16
- The holder of a child disability pension.

Additionally, you must be a permanent resident of the Northern Territory and have a long term illness or disability (i.e. Illness for least 12 months).

TIMES will be contacted by your health practitioner or therapist. The therapist will advise on the appropriate equipment for you. If you fulfil the above criteria TIMES will fund and purchase the mobility equipment.

**MAINTENANCE:** It is the responsibility of TIMES to make sure the equipment they provide is safe to use. In cases where it becomes worn, damaged or unsafe, you should contact either TIMES or your health practitioner who will have it fixed or replaced.

**FIRST POINT OF CONTACT:** If you already have a relationship with a health practitioner or therapist ask them to contact TIMES on your behalf. If you don't, go and see your nearest health centre and ask them about mobility equipment available through TIMES.

#### Queensland

**PROCESS:** Wheelchairs and wheeled walking aids are subsidised by Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme (MASS), Queensland Health, for people with a permanent and stabilised disability. To be eligible, a person must:

- Be the holder of specific concession cards
- Be assessed by an occupational therapist or physiotherapist as requiring the mobility aid to enable independent mobility within the home environment.

The therapist then makes application to MASS on the person's behalf.

The Independent Living Centre runs a mobile service to Indigenous people with a disability, carers and health or support workers anywhere in Queensland. Staff at the ILC provide advice about the most appropriate equipment and you can trial the equipment on site to check for fit, function and suitability to your conditions. The ILC will then follow with order forms and quotes from equipment supply companies and work with local staff to help with applications for funding equipment.

## How to get a wheelchair



**MAINTENANCE:** MASS will pay for repairs and maintenance for wear and tear associated with reasonable use of the mobility aid both within the home and community access.

**FIRST POINT OF CONTACT:** A Registered Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist employed either within the government, non government agencies or privately.

Contact the ILC on 1300 885 886 and ask for the Indigenous Liaison Officer. You can also keep in touch through their online programs by email, internet and video conference.

<http://www.health.qld.gov.au/mass/>

### South Australia

**PROCESS:** Wheelchair funding is provided under the Independent Living Equipment Program (ILEP), which is managed by the Independent Living Centre of SA Inc. This program covers the cost of wheelchairs for South Australian residents aged 18–65 with a permanent disability, if they are registered with Options Coordination. Options Coordination is a state-wide network of five agencies that work together to assist people with disabilities to access services.

Firstly, a referral for equipment is written by your GP. A therapist then conducts a needs assessment to establish the priority for funding the equipment. You may be placed on a waiting list until funding becomes available.

**MAINTENANCE:** Wheelchairs provided under the ILEP scheme are maintained with ILEP funds in almost all cases. Contact 1300 130 302 or visit <http://www.ilc.asn.au>

**FIRST POINT OF CONTACT:** In most remote regions of SA, contact the nearest Options Coordination Office. They register you as a disabled person and help you apply for a wheelchair.

#### ILEP OFFICES:

Port Augusta: 08 8648 5766

Whyalla: 08 8645 2055

Port Lincoln: 08 8683 0499

Port Pirie: 08 8632 4222

Independent Living Centre: 08 8266 5260

**NOTE:** If you live on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands the NPY Women's Council is your first point of contact, 08 8956 0638.

### Tasmania

**FUNDING:** The Community Equipment Scheme (CES) provides mobility and continence aids as determined by the authorised prescriber. Clients eligible for the subsidy can rent a wheelchair for \$50/year, otherwise the cost is \$20/month.

#### CONTACTS FOR CES IN YOUR AREA:

South: 03 6222 7226

North: 03 6348 7906

North-West: 06 6440 7091

**MAINTENANCE:** Clients are responsible for maintaining tyres, tube and batteries. For all other maintenance issues, CES will cover the costs up to \$2000.

**FIRST POINT OF CONTACT:** It is best to start with your GP or ILC (Ph. 03 6334 5889) who can refer you to an occupational therapist. They will make an assessment on suitable mobility aids.

### Victoria

The Victorian Aids and Equipment Program (A&EP) aims to assist eligible people to access subsidised aids and equipment to enhance their safety and independence, support their family and carers and prevent premature admission to institutional care or high cost services.

You may be eligible if:

- You have a long term or permanent disability
- You are a permanent resident of Victoria and hold a Medicare card.

You may not be eligible if:

- You live in a Commonwealth Government funded residential care facility or receive a Community Aged Care Package
- You are receiving aids and equipment through other programs
- You are receiving or entitled to compensation or you are able to claim insurance through a private health insurance provider.

If funds are not available immediately you may be placed on a waiting listing. Your local A&EP service provider can provide more details; call Department of Human Services, 1800 783 783.

**FIRST POINT OF CONTACT:** A professional assessment (occupational therapist or physiotherapist) is required to determine the most appropriate and cost effective type of aid or equipment needed.

**NOTE:** These are not the only ways to obtain funding for wheelchairs in Victoria.

### Western Australia

**PROCESS:** Wheelchair funding is provided to eligible people with a permanent and long-term disability under the Western Australian Government's Community Aids and Equipment Program (CAEP). A visiting occupational therapist or physiotherapist from a hospital or health service will assess your eligibility and functional needs, and if you meet the criteria, they will prescribe and provide you with a wheelchair. Additionally, the Disability Services Commission (DSC) has a Country Services Directorate. The Country Services Directorate provides Local Area Coordinators (LAC) to help you to access a range of services including therapists who prescribe wheelchairs.

**MAINTENANCE:** Organised and provided by the occupational therapist or physiotherapist who prescribed the wheelchair or contact your LAC from DSC.

**FIRST POINT OF CONTACT:** The local clinic or visiting nurse is a good place to go first. They will help to arrange an appointment with an occupational therapist or an Allied Health Team (occupational therapists and physiotherapists) that visits remote communities periodically. Additionally, the LAC can help make arrangements for you to be assessed and access a wheelchair.

#### Note

Normal wheelchairs often don't suit conditions in remote communities very well. Sandy and rocky terrain might be impassable or might damage the wheelchair. Often maintenance requires a specialist or certain materials. Sending the wheelchair back to the city for repairs can take a long time. Lots of different people are working on ways to improve wheelchair service in remote areas. For example, in the Pilbara region, disability support workers are hoping to train CDEP workers in wheelchair maintenance. The Queensland ILC is working to produce a three-wheeler wheelchair that can travel onto beaches and rough terrain. At CAT, we are currently working on ways to make conventional wheelchairs more suitable to Indigenous people.

Written by Elliot Rich