



Australian Government

Comcare

PUTTING YOU *FIRST*

AIDS AND APPLIANCES

Aids and Appliances is the term used for equipment that may be required to assist an injured employee.

Comcare regards Aids and Appliances as either:

1. Medical treatment, surgical supply or curative apparatus or
2. Rehabilitation aids and appliances.

1. MEDICAL TREATMENT AIDS, SURGICAL SUPPLIES OR CURATIVE APPARATUS

A doctor, physiotherapist or other recognised treatment provider (under Section 16 of the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988* (SRC Act)) most commonly prescribes these items. It is considered a 'medical/surgical supply, curative apparatus, or artificial limb or other similar aid or appliance'. These are all items that directly assist employees with their physical or body functions.

Items that are likely to be included in this group include:

- > prostheses
- > orthopaedic shoes
- > wheelchairs
- > TENS machines.

2. REHABILITATION AIDS AND APPLIANCES

A rehabilitation aid or appliance (as determined under section 39 of the SRC Act) is an item that assists the injured worker to perform basic home or work functions such as:

- > grooming, dressing, personal hygiene, sleeping
- > eating, food preparation
- > communication
- > mobility
- > maintaining correct posture.

This would include such items as:

- > backrest
- > jar opener
- > specialised desk
- > tap turner
- > specialised chair
- > non-slip mat.

Rehabilitation aids will only be approved if an injured employee has commenced a Return To Work Plan (RTWP) or has been assessed by a rehabilitation provider as not capable to undertake a RTWP.

An item requested for use in the workplace by an injured employee must be specific to the injury. It is the responsibility of the employer under the Section 16 of the *Occupational Health and Safety (Commonwealth Employment) Act 1991* (OHS (CE) Act) to provide employees with equipment that is appropriate to their individual health and safety needs.

It is therefore reasonable for the employer to provide items such as:

- > adjustable office chair
- > footrest
- > document holder
- > wrist-rest
- > angled writing boards.

An employer-purchased item remains the property of the agency. It is usually less expensive for the employer to arrange the purchase rather than a third party. An employer may also have taxation concessions available. Where a rehabilitation provider has recommended a specialised piece of equipment, a report should be submitted to the case manager.

This report should clearly outline the reasons for recommending the equipment. If the request for funding is directed to the Comcare claims manager, it should be accompanied by the form *Application for Aids & Appliances*, with the Case Manager's agreement. This is located in the *Rehabilitation Handbook for Case Managers* (Appendix E).

If Comcare approves an item for payment, it shall remain the property of the individual.

As a general rule, Comcare does not pay for exercise and gym equipment.

HOW TO ARRANGE PROVISION OF THE EQUIPMENT AND PAYMENT

1. Medical treatment aids, surgical supplies or curative apparatus will require the completion of the *Claim for Aids and Appliances excluding Hearing Aids* form by the treating medical practitioner.
2. For rehabilitation aids, the Approved Rehabilitation Provider should complete the relevant assessment and report. The assessment report should clearly outline the reasons for:
 - > recommending the equipment
 - > alternatives considered
 - > how long it will be required for
 - > when the need for the item will be reviewed
 - > and recommended suppliers.
3. The Approved Rehabilitation Provider should complete the *Claim for Aids and Appliances excluding Hearing Aids* form, obtain agreement from the case manager, and submit to the Comcare claims manager with the report.
4. The Comcare claims manager will make a determination for purchase of the items, and advise the case manager.
5. Details of the recommended item can be included on the RTWP, in the *Concurrent Medical/Health Services* section, to provide a more complete description of Return To Work services.

If approved, the case manager or provider will arrange for the purchase of the item.

Invoices are sent directly to Comcare.

This process is the same for the repair or replacement of approved aids. Home and work modifications follow the same process also with greater communication with Comcare Rehabilitation Advisors throughout the process expected.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information, please contact the Comcare Rehabilitation Advisors on 1300 366 979 or visit Comcare's web site www.comcare.gov.au.