



# GUIDANCE FOR OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS UNDERTAKING HOME ASSESSMENTS

## INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITIONS

This information sheet outlines Comcare’s expectations of Occupational Therapists conducting Household and Attendant Care Service Assessments (Home Assessments).

The *Safety Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988* (SRC Act) defines ‘household services’ as basic services that assist the employee with domestic tasks (e.g. cooking, house cleaning, laundry and gardening) which are reasonably required as a result of a compensable injury for the proper running and maintenance of the employee’s household. Compensation is not payable for household maintenance such as painting and decorating, washing and servicing vehicles or house repairs.

‘Attendant care services’ refers to services (other than household services, medical services or nursing care) reasonably required for the essential and regular personal care of the employee (such as bathing and feeding).

## COMCARE’S HOUSEHOLD AND ATTENDANT CARE SERVICE MODEL

Comcare’s goal for household and attendant care services is to achieve optimal return to work and health outcomes while maximising employees’ independence.

The purpose of conducting Home Assessments is to identify household and attendant care services that are appropriate for the employee’s compensable injury, stage of recovery and household circumstances. Appropriate short-term assistance may be provided in the acute post-injury (or post-surgery) period to enable an efficient return to work and health. Where recovery is prolonged, employees’ should be empowered to perform tasks as independently as possible. Compensation is only payable for support required due to the compensable injury.

Occupational Therapist’s Home Assessment recommendations enable Comcare to make consistent, sound and proper decisions regarding the provision of attendant care and household services based on employees’ needs and circumstances.

Consistent with the Occupational Therapy Board of Australia’s Code of Conduct, services recommended should be appropriate for the assessed needs and not excessive, unnecessary or not reasonably required.

To achieve this and enable Comcare to apply the SRC Act’s ‘reasonably required’ test, Occupational Therapists should apply the following preference hierarchy to identify the most appropriate interventions:

Preference	Intervention
1	Identify how the employee can perform the tasks independently
2	Identify member(s) of the employee’s family or household who could reasonably be expected to perform the tasks (i.e. without substantial disruption to their employment or other activities)
3	Train the employee in adaptive techniques and/or the use assistive equipment enabling them to perform the tasks
4	Identify an amount and frequency of professional household and attendant care services reasonably required for tasks and a gradual reduction of services (where reasonable) to achieve maximum independence.

The type and frequency of services employees require is expected to reduce as employees recover and adapt to their limitations. Recommended assistance should include a gradual reduction of services.



## ASSESSMENT SCOPE

The scope of initial home assessments in the acute stage of injuries should include assistance with all tasks the employee has indicated may be a barrier to them returning to work and health efficiently.

The scope of review assessments should be limited to tasks the employee has formally asked Comcare for assistance with due to their compensable injury for which their treating doctor has recommended the provision of services.

To set clear expectations, Occupational Therapists should explain the scope of the assessment to the employee at the start of the assessment.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Occupational Therapists are expected to read all information provided by Comcare and to consider it when developing their recommendations.

## REPORT TEMPLATE

Reports should be in the format of Comcare's *Home Assessment (Occupational Therapy) Report template*. Please complete all fields and attach any additional information relevant to your assessment.

The Occupational Therapist should explain the reasoning behind their recommendations and summarise the evidence supporting them.

All recommendations should be based on clear evidence related to the employee's medical, functional and household status.

## OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY TO ACHIEVE INDEPENDENCE

It is expected that in most cases the OT will train the worker in adaptive techniques or recommend assistive equipment during the assessment. In some cases, it may be reasonable to recommend up to two additional Occupational Therapy sessions to train employees in adaptive techniques with or without assistive equipment. These sessions should empower the employee to perform activities independently. In these cases the goals, intervention strategies, progress measures, frequency, duration and cost must be clearly outlined at point nine on the report template.

## CONSULTING TREATING PRACTITIONERS

Occupational Therapists conducting assessments may contact the employee's treating medical practitioner to understand the employee's compensable medical condition and limitations, and to discuss their assessment and recommendations.

Where appropriate, Occupational Therapists may also contact other parties for information (e.g. the employee's physiotherapist or rehabilitation provider). The Occupational Therapist will need to obtain the employee's consent before contacting their treating medical practitioners.