

# SWEP e-NEWS

10<sup>th</sup> EDITION FOR CONSUMERS



December 2022



[To use an interpreter over the telephone – Ph: 131 450](tel:131450)

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*The State-wide Equipment Program (SWEP) will close over the Christmas period from 5.00 p.m. on Friday, 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 2022 and re-open at 8.30 a.m. on Tuesday, 03<sup>rd</sup> January, 2023*



*We wish you a safe and happy festive season!  
Warmest regards and best wishes, SWEP Leadership & Staff*

## Welcome to the 10<sup>th</sup> Edition of SWEP e-News for Consumers

Hello everyone and welcome to the 10th Edition of our annual newsletter. On behalf of SWEP, thank you to the tens of thousands of State funded Victorians; NDIS Participants and private consumers (supported by our Safety Link Assist team); who we have had the privilege to support during 2022.

After a very challenging two years it was good to see the gradual easing of Covid-19 restrictions in 2022. Unfortunately, we continue to experience some of the 'flow on effects' such as increased manufacturing, product & delivery costs, as well as delays for many consumers awaiting clinical assessments, for referral to our service.

On a positive note, we were delighted to recently receive additional funding from the Department of Health, which has allowed us to start clearing our waiting lists and progress completed applications straight to order, significantly reducing the amount of time you need to wait for your equipment or products.

On behalf of the SWEP team, we hope that you have a lovely time over the festive season, in whatever traditional manner you celebrate.

**Jeni Burton**  
Operations Director – State-wide Equipment Program



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## Our Programs

### Safety Link Assist (formerly Empower Care Options)

The commercial arm of our business has been in operation now for over 2 years, with primary focus on providing services to NDIS Participants and those consumers who are not eligible for support through the State funded programs. You may have noticed that we are in the midst of re-branding our services from Empower Care Options to Safety Link Assist, and we look forward to formally launching our new brand and website in 2023.

The Safety Link Assist team has recently welcomed two new team members Toni and Monica, due to the ever-increasing demand for the services we offer through this program.

This year our team has supported 1,644 unique Participants and privately funded consumers, with supply across the range of supports available. This has been supported by SWEP's many contracted Suppliers.

This team also co-ordinates the provision of oxygen equipment for people recovering from Covid 19, upon referral from their discharging hospital. This year we have supported over 35 people each month in their recovery from Covid. The Department of Health will shortly re-advertise this program via Victorian Hospitals, to ensure that patients affected by the current Covid wave are adequately supported in their recovery in 2023.

### Our State funded Programs

This year our State funded programs have supported approx. 19,800 unique consumers with provision of over 74,000 individual pieces of equipment and/or products, repairs or home/vehicle modifications. We received more than 19,600 applications for support (approx. 377 applications per week). We have also received more than 35,700 incoming telephone calls during the year (approx. 138 calls every day we are open, answering most calls within approx. 20 seconds).

#### 1. Lymphoedema Compression Garments Program (LCGP)

Since January 2022, SWEP have assisted approx. 2,500 eligible people with subsidised funding towards their compression garments.

Due to increasingly high demand for this program for people suffering from clinically diagnosed lymphoedema, we are currently undertaking consultation with key stakeholders including Cancer Council Victoria, Breast Cancer Network and the Australian Lymphology Association (ALA), to consider the best way we can equitably provide support to the many people applying for support, within the constraints of our budget.



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## 2. Domiciliary Oxygen Program (DOP)

The Domiciliary Oxygen Program currently supports over 3,600 people each year who require supplementary oxygen equipment. This does not include those consumers who are eligible for supplementary oxygen under our Covid Oxygen Program.

## 3. Laryngectomy Consumables Program (LCP)

Over the past twelve months, the LCP have provided funding assistance to 209 eligible consumers for electrolarynx voice aids, laryngectomy consumables, and voice prostheses (standard and specialised). This crucial funding ensures that Victorian Laryngectomy patients can access everyday items they need to assist with breathing and the prevention of infections.

## 4. Continence Team (CA)

This year the Continence Program has supported more than 4,300 people in receiving continence products, placing over 9,200 purchase orders.

This year we saw the discontinuation in manufacturing of a small range of our contracted continence products and have been liaising closely with affected consumers and their practitioners to substitute their regular orders, with 'like for like' products.

We recently welcomed new staff member, Linda, who is a welcome addition to our Continence team.

## 5. Assistive Technology and Asset Management teams (AT)

The AT team continue to process a large volume of applications for an extensive range of equipment items, home and vehicle modifications. In 2022 the team received and processed approx. 9,600 applications and placed more than 9,800 orders. We have recently welcomed new staff, Margaret, Mel and Lauren to our team.

Throughout 2022, through our repairs and re-issue partnership with Chemtronics, we have facilitated approximately 5,000 repairs for both State funded consumers and NDIS Participants, as well as supplied approx. 1,800 fully refurbished items of equipment through our extensive refurbished equipment pool.

Our Preventative Maintenance Program continues to provide ongoing maintenance to equipment, the goal being to improve reliability of equipment and consumer and/or carer safety, through annual check. This service has been provided to 1,400 consumers throughout the year, with servicing of over 1,950 pieces of equipment.



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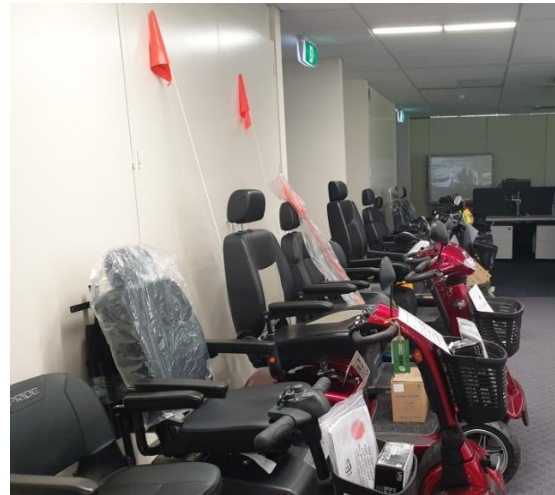
If you have any questions regarding any of the services we provide, please contact SWEP on 1300 747 937 or your Practitioner, regarding how we can support you.

## Procurement

Our current Supplier contracts for non-customised equipment, are due to expire on 31 December 2022. In May we released a new Tender and underwent a robust tender evaluation process, including a desktop and hands-on evaluation of over 500 pieces of equipment including manual wheelchairs, walking aids, scooters, three function beds, mattresses, pressure cushions, bathroom aids, hoists, specialised seating, rise recline chairs etc. This evaluation of products was undertaken by two highly experienced Occupational Therapists and a Rehabilitation Engineer.

This will ensure that our contracted equipment range remains relevant to current technologies, includes the latest models and features, provides value for money and ensures that our equipment range can meet the needs of the vast majority of people accessing our service for equipment. Our new product catalogue will be released in January 2023.

While pricing is important, our evaluation process also provides an assessment of Supplier capability to meet our delivery, warranty & consumer support expectations; legislative compliance; as well as innovation and quality products.







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## SWEP Out and About – Community Engagement Activities



SWEP remains committed to contributing/participating in engagement with external stakeholders and community groups, both in person or online. We also have a Consumer Reference Group, made up of six community members, who participate in regular meetings with our leadership team and provide feedback and advice from a consumer perspective.

If you would like us to attend a community group or online forum you are connected to, please do not hesitate to contact us by phone (1300 747 937) or email [swep@bhs.org.au](mailto:swep@bhs.org.au)

Our Operations Manager, Hana Hey is largely responsible for our community engagement activities. This year Hana and other Leadership team members represented SWEP at a variety of events including:

- January - Disability Service Provider and Participant Connection Expo 2022 – Melbourne
- June - OT Exchange – Centre Piece at Melbourne Park
- August - 2022 Care Expo – Melbourne Showgrounds
- September - Melton City Council Social Support Group – (multiple sessions) Taylors Hill
- December - Melbourne Disability Expo 2022 – Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre



2022 Care Expo – Karolina pictured left and Hana right



2022 Melbourne Disability Expo – Hana pictured left and Kerry right



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2022 OT Exchange – Kerry pictured left and Hana right

Sometimes not everything goes to plan and this was certainly the case when Hana and Kerry attended the 2022 OT Exchange.

An admin oversight saw Hana and Kerry arrive to an empty booth - oops we forgot to order the furniture!

Whilst the SWEP Personal Assistant made frantic phone calls and even considered a quick visit to Bunnings, the event organisers quickly averted the situation, and kindly re-located some furniture from the conference foyer.

The infographic features the SWEP logo at the top. Below it, the text reads '2022 CONSUMER SATISFACTION SURVEY'. A 'Fun Fact!' section states: 'This year we sent out 1,536 surveys to our amazing SWEP family. Thank you to the more than 20% of you who took the time to respond with your thoughts and feedback!'. The 'The Headlines!' section notes: 'In 2022, SWEP achieved the highest rate of overall consumer satisfaction (99%) since our inception in 2010! Overall satisfaction that the equipment/service has helped respondents achieve your goals (93.4%)'. Two circular charts show 'Satisfied 99%' and 'Helped 93.4%'. An illustration of a person with a cart and a dollar sign is associated with '93.1% Overall satisfaction with SWEP suppliers.' Another illustration of a person in a wheelchair playing a guitar is associated with '96.4% of respondents indicated they were satisfied that the equipment supplied did what they expected it to do.'

## Consumer Survey Results

Thank you to those people who were randomly selected to participate in our 2022 Annual Consumer Survey.

Your feedback (whether positive or negative) is extremely valuable and allows us to strive for continual service improvements, to enhance the consumer experience.



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## Celebrating our People



The State-wide Equipment Program currently employs 35 people, in varying capacity, both full-time and part-time. Although our admin teams are extremely busy processing applications across the various program streams, on occasion we 'take a breath' to acknowledge the efforts/achievements of our team, along with the occasional morning tea to celebrate milestone birthdays.

This year we celebrated a number of staff 'Years of Service Awards' including that of our Operations Director, Jeni Burton who was acknowledged for 45 years of service to Grampians Health - Ballarat. Jeni started her career in 1977 as an Allied Health Assistant and in 1984 transitioned to managing the 'Program of Aids for Disabled' for people across the Grampians Region, later re-named the Victorian Aids & Equipment Program. In 2010 Grampians Health, Ballarat were successful in a tender to the Department of Health & Human Services, for the provision of aids & equipment across the entire State of Victoria, and Jeni has been leading SWEP ever since that time.



## SWEP Feedback

As one of our consumers, clients or NDIS Participants, you are the focus of our efforts. Your feedback helps us know what we are doing well and where we need to improve. If you have any compliments, suggestions or concerns about any aspect of our service please visit our website <https://swep.bhs.org.au/providing-feedback.php>



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We would like to share with you a few positive stories received by our team throughout 2022 (de-identified).

Compliment received from Practitioner regarding repair for NDIS Participant:

*"On behalf of my client, her family and care team, I am writing to thank everyone involved for the monumental and wonderful outcome of an "again-functional" power wheelchair. It is epically fabulous that in just over 48 hours, two appointments (an initial immediate callout to assess the problem, and this afternoon's attendance for repairs) with ordering/sourcing equipment have been completed, resulting in the power wheelchair working in full and as required for my client's complex care needs again. Thank you so much for the awareness of and response to this urgency, and the efficiency and effectiveness of all services and support systems involved. Please share my thanks with all who participated in this outcome – from those who responded to the email requesting an initial service to those actioning the repairs (which continue in progress just now) and everyone in between. If I could send choccies and other suitable thanks thru the email ether – I would!!!"*

*"I write to say I have received the Continence Products you sent me on 31 August and to say thank you. I am most appreciative of these products, which I am sure will be most helpful. Incontinence is a most embarrassing problem and it is good to know there is so much out there to help people like me cope."*

*"To the Lymphoedema Compression Garment Team at SWEP, I hope that you are all well and that this card adds colour to your lives. Thank you for assisting me in obtaining compression garments which assist me to walk with confidence every day. Warmest Regards"*

*"🌸❤️😊👍 It is with sincere thanks that I received my means of being mobile today, I can't thank you enough for the beautiful Walker that will now enable me to be independent and gain some form of travel, am eager to try my new form of support with eagerness, please accept my sincere thanks for your kind support, yours in appreciation".*

Compliment received for SWEP contracted Oxygen Supplier:

*"Good morning. We have just had our oxygenator checked and I just want to commend the lovely young man who was working in Geelong (Corio) this morning. He is an absolute credit to your organisation, exceptionally friendly and efficient. He really deserves a decent pat on the back from those he works for. Thank you for your support. Regards"*

