



Support services since 1980

The State-wide Equipment Program (SWEP) Subsidy for wig purchases

SWEP enables people with medically certified hair loss, to receive a subsidy for wig purchases. For adults this is \$240 every two years. For children under 16, the subsidy is \$600 per human hair wig.

This program replaced the former Aids and Equipment Program (A&EP), but is essentially the same with the same level of subsidy. The subsidy is not paid retrospectively, that is you cannot purchase your wig and then apply for the subsidy. You must be notified by SWEP that funding is available for you before you can obtain your wig. The subsidy is paid to your supplier, not to you, **you pay the difference** between the subsidy and the actual cost of the wig, **to your supplier**.

You will not be eligible for the subsidy if you can claim against your private health insurance extras.

The SWEP web page explains all the requirements to get a subsidy, but we have also added here, some comments based on the experience of AASA members, and some of the questions they have raised.

Basic Steps

1. For those who have not had a subsidy previously

If you have not applied for a subsidy in the past you will need to get on to the SWEP database. You only need to do this once. You will need to fill in an application form (Application/Eligibility Form) which is downloadable from the SWEP website or you can be mailed one by requesting one from SWEP

(SWEP form http://swep.bhs.org.au/sites/default/files/forms/Application%202011_0.pdf)

Page 4 of the form is for your GP or dermatologist to certify that your hair loss results from a medical condition (SWEP says: ..(a wig) *"May be provided to persons suffering from permanent loss of hair as a result of disease or disability"*). Don't let the term 'permanent' stop you from applying if your hair comes and goes because this is the nature of AA and to our knowledge no one has been excluded on 'not permanent' grounds.

Post your completed form to
SWEP
A&EP Department
PO Box 1993
Bakery Hill 3354.

You can contact SWEP 8.30 am to 5 pm Monday to Friday

phone: 1300 747 937 or 03 5333 8100

fax: 03 5333 8111

SWEP will inform you they have received your application. SWEP will then notify you when funding is available for you to be able to go to the supplier you have nominated and purchase the wig that you want as detailed below.

2. For those who have received a subsidy in the past

If you are already on SWEP's database, that is you have applied for the subsidy in the past under the Aids and Equipment Program, contact SWEP and let them know you need another wig and they will be able to tell you how long the waiting list is (currently we are being told 9 months). They will notify you when funds are available. You MAY be asked to send SWEP a quote from your chosen supplier (not everyone has been asked to do this). If this happens you need to go to your supplier, choose the wig you want, get your supplier to give you a quote and you then mail this to SWEP.

SWEP will contact your supplier and you, to let you know when you can purchase your wig. SWEP sends the cheque to your supplier and you will then pay the supplier the difference between the subsidy amount (paid directly to your supplier) and the cost of the wig.

Firstly you need to do your wig 'shopping' before submitting your form. There are some variations in SWEP practices, for example some members have been able to divide the subsidy into \$120 a year instead of \$240 every 2 years. The

SWEP web page notes,

The replacement of a wig will be available after a minimum of 2 years, subject to reassessment by a general practitioner.

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There is a school of thought that as soon as you receive your wig, you should ask to go back on the waiting list immediately. This seems to be a practical way of coping with the fact that synthetic wigs only last around 12 months and if the waiting list is 9 months, this strategy would help ensure that a satisfactory and well maintained wig is available continuously for the person. But this would depend on whether the subsidy could be divided into \$120 a year. At present we do not know what the SWEP response to this might be. This may not concern someone who maintains 2 wigs and only wants to purchase new wigs every two years, but even in this case if the waiting list is 9 months, planning ahead about the best time to get back on the waiting list is still important, to avoid a lengthy delay in getting a new wig.

Also there are all sorts of specific circumstances in which the scheme may not meet a person's needs, for example if there are circumstances where a person needs a wig straight away such as in a case of accidental damage. Most people know that opening ovens wearing a synthetic fibre wig risks ruining the fibres, but it's very easy to overlook this.

Other Private Health Insurance Companies

MediBank Private 'Extras'

You can buy coverage for 'extras only' without hospital coverage.

Rebates under "Health Appliances and external prostheses"

All plans have a waiting period of 2 months

Top Extras 55

\$8.38 pw

\$200 per year

Top Extras 70

\$12.07 pw

\$400 per year

Top Extras 85

\$15.75 pw

\$500 per year

AHM Health Insurance:

Will cover under **Super Extras** - as a non surgical prosthesis

Rebate of \$160 with no wait, must pay in full then they reimburse

30 day cooling off period

HCF:

Will cover, under **Multi Cover**

Rebate of \$250 p/person p/year, 12 month waiting period

NIB: Will cover under **Top cover**- as an artificial aid

Rebate of 75% up to the value of \$800 p/year, 12 month waiting period

Under **Young at Heart** (for over 55's)- as an artificial aid

Rebate of 75% up to the value of \$1000 p/year, 12 month waiting period

Provider has to be registered with NIB

Australian Unity:

Will cover under **Extras Cover Comprehensive**

Rebate of 75% up to the value of \$500 p/2 years, 12 month waiting period

HBF: Will cover under **Essential Standard**

Rebate of 75% up to the value of \$400 p/year

NB: Version 1.0 Please seek detailed information from your private health insurance provider