

National Guideline

for

Vehicle Modifications

(RAP Schedule No. AP01)

NOTE: PRIOR APPROVAL FROM THE DEPARTMENT **IS REQUIRED** BEFORE THE SUPPLY OF THIS ITEM.

Definition of vehicle modifications

A vehicle modification is a modification made to a car/van (hereafter 'vehicle') to allow an entitled person with a disability to access, and drive, or travel in. These include modifications and equipment to assist with transfers, manual wheelchair transport (hoists), seating needs, customised driving controls and other related devices.

Manual vehicles will not generally be converted to automatic.

Modifications are only to be undertaken by appropriately qualified persons.

State legislative requirements

Modifications that require alteration(s) to driving controls may require local licence endorsement. In all instances, these modifications should conform with relevant State/Territory Government requirements.

Australian Standards

Australian Standards include 'Motor Vehicle controls/adaptive systems for people with disabilities/general requirements' AS3954.1/1991, and 'Motor vehicle controls/adaptive systems for people with disabilities/hand controls/product requirements', AS3954.2/1991.

Special eligibility requirements

The entitled person must have an assessed clinical need for vehicle modifications due to a war-caused injury or disease/accepted disability (WCI/AD).

This applies to both Gold and White Card holders.

Initial request

The initial request for car modification/s must come from the assessing health provider(s) specified in the Schedule: certified driving Occupational Therapist, LMO/GP, or Specialist. The request must provide all necessary clinical information.

Prior approval

Prior approval is required before proceeding with each stage of the modification process, that is:

- initial assessment;
- remedial lessons/reassessment; and
- installation of modifications.

Vehicle ownership and licences

The entitled person must verify ownership of the vehicle, and possession of a suitably endorsed licence where required – by them or some other person who will have responsibility for driving the vehicle – before the Commission will proceed with modification.

If the vehicle was purchased with the knowledge of specific disability requirements that have not or cannot be readily met (e.g. inadequate car boot space for wheelchair or inappropriate seat height and depth compromising transfer ability), the Commission will not necessarily fund equipment and modifications.

The age and condition of the vehicle should be taken into consideration. The purchase of a new or second-hand vehicle with the necessary modification(s) in place may be considered where that is the most cost-effective and clinically appropriate option.

Assessment

Following the initial request, the responsible assessing health provider (a certified driving OT) is required to undertake an assessment and provide a report which sets out:

- relevant clinical information in support of the request
- details of the entitled person's physical, cognitive, and visual-spatial abilities;
- that the vehicle modifications:
 - are the most appropriate;
 - have been determined in partnership with the potential user (and their carer as appropriate);
 - have been assessed against other less expensive options (e.g.: manual lightweight wheelchair with quick release axles to enable car boot storage as an alternative to a car hoist); and
 - have been trialled to determine suitability.
- quotations for the modifications;
- details of any necessary training and advice that has been or will be provided.

Additional criteria

The following additional criteria must be met before approving vehicle modifications:

1. the entitled person is unable to safely drive or travel in an unmodified vehicle; and
2. the entitled person should, where they are the driver, have an appropriate level of physical function to safely operate the modified vehicle.

Notification to the entitled person

Notification to the entitled person must include:

- information about their responsibility to use the modified vehicle safely and in accordance with local and state/territory government requirements;
- the requirement for entitled person or their carer, as appropriate, to report any emergent circumstances that may impact upon the entitled person's ability to safely drive the modified vehicle to the certified driving OT, LMO/GP or specialist;
- advice that the Department is not liable for any accident in which the vehicle may be involved; and
- a recommendation that the entitled person should advise their insurance company of the vehicle modification.