

Artificial Limb Service (NSW-ALS) - New South Wales

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Summary Arrangements for the provision of prosthetic services to persons in New South Wales.

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Director-General

This Policy Directive may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Compliance with this directive is **mandatory** for NSW Health and is a condition of subsidy for public health organisations.

CIRCULAR

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New South Wales Artificial Limb Service (NSW-ALS)

This circular sets out the revised policy and procedure arrangements for the New South Wales Artificial Limb Service (NSW-ALS) effective from 1 July 2000. The arrangements outlined in this circular supersede all previous circulars and memoranda on the NSW-ALS including circular 2000/58. This circular includes a new section on replaced prostheses.

PURPOSE OF THIS CIRCULAR

This circular has been developed for use by Area Health Services, amputee clinics and health care professionals including prescribing physicians and therapists involved in referring, treating or assisting amputees to access services from the NSW-ALS. It outlines the policy for the NSW-ALS effective from 30 April 2001.

This circular should be used in conjunction with the NSW-ALS Policy Guidelines. The Policy Guidelines provide more detailed information on the NSW-ALS.

As an integral part of the quality management of the NSW-ALS, this circular and the Policy Guidelines should be read in conjunction with the *Accreditation Guidelines for Prescribers, Clinics and Prosthetists* developed by Calvary Hospital, Kogarah Inc.

1. OBJECTIVE OF THE NSW-ALS

The objectives of the NSW-ALS are to ensure that:

- Eligible clients have fair access to appropriate, high quality prosthetic services
- These prosthetic services are responsive to the needs of clients and provided in a cost-efficient manner.

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In accordance with the provisions incorporated in the Accounts and Audit Determination, the Board of Directors, Chief Executive Officers and their equivalents, within a public health organisation, shall be held responsible for ensuring the observance of Departmental policy (including circulars and procedure manuals) as issued by the Minister and the Director-General of the Department of Health.

2. TARGET GROUP

The NSW-ALS is responsible for the provision of artificial limbs to eligible community amputees residing in New South Wales.

Formerly administered by the Department of Veterans' Affairs as the Artificial Limb Scheme, it was transferred to NSW Health in April 1997.

3. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The NSW-ALS covers all permanent New South Wales residents.

Community eligible client: A person is *prima facie* eligible under the NSW-ALS if he/she is permanent resident of NSW and holds or is included on a Medicare Card.

Compensation clients: In all compensation cases where there has been a settlement and there has been money allocated for the supply of prostheses, the client will be expected to provide for his/her own prosthetic requirements. Pending compensation cases are treated under the NSW-ALS as if the client is eligible to use the NSW-ALS until the result of his /her claim is known.

Residents of other countries: The NSW-ALS may provide services for those foreign nations whose country has a reciprocal health care arrangement with Australia.

Residents of other States/Territories: The NSW-ALS will pay for minor repairs and reasonable major prosthetic services for those interstate visitors who would be eligible in their state of origin.

Determination of Eligibility: The staff of the prescribing clinic or the prescriber must obtain and record the client's Medicare number at the initial contact before issuing a prescription.

4. EXCLUSIONS FROM THE NSW-ALS

A person who is not eligible under the NSW-ALS:

- (a) is a veteran in terms of Part V of the Veterans' Entitlement Act 1986, or
- (b) a person who has a claim or entitlement to damages or compensation in relation to the incident which led to the requirement of the service.

5. HOW SERVICES ARE PROVIDED

Prosthetic services are currently provided by six commercial limb manufacturers and two prosthetic services funded through the Hunter and Greater Murray Area Health Services. Prescribing is performed in a series of 47 accredited clinics located throughout NSW. Clinics are linked with a rehabilitation service and provided by the Area Health Services responsible for these rehabilitation services.

6. ACCESS TO SERVICES

Client Information: Amputees should be provided with information and counselling regarding prosthetic options and services either before or immediately following amputation. Information should include a list of accredited amputee clinics and limb manufacturers and details of amputee organisations. Peer counselling should also be offered at an early stage of rehabilitation.

Choice of Limb Manufacturer and Clinic: It is the right of the client to choose a limb manufacturer from the list of accredited limb manufacturers. Although clients may initially receive advice from amputee clinic staff or peer counsellors, they **must** be allowed to exercise freedom of choice and may not be directed to any limb manufacturer or clinic. Advice regarding the client's choice of limb manufacturer must be forwarded to the NSW-ALS with the prescription.

7. COMPLAINTS/APPEALS

If clients are concerned about any aspect of the prescription, approval, manufacture or acquittal processes, then a complaint may be made to the NSW-ALS. Verbal complaints will be recorded in the NSW-ALS complaints register. However, clients will be advised that a written complaint will assist in following up the verbal complaint.

8. CLIENT CONTRIBUTION

Clients, except pensioners and holders of certain Centrelink cards who are exempt, are required to pay 15% of the scheduled cost of the provision, maintenance and repair of their prostheses up to a maximum of \$200 per financial year. Under the NSW-ALS, persons holding a valid Pensioner Concession Card, a valid Health Care Card or a valid Commonwealth Seniors Health Card are entitled to receive free prostheses.

9. WHAT IS AVAILABLE UNDER THE NSW-ALS

Prescriptions: All prescriptions must be issued by an accredited prescriber. Prescriptions may be varied by prescribers, working within the originating clinic, before acquittal. Prescriptions must be issued from an accredited amputee clinic for :

- All primary prostheses
- Replacement prostheses requiring modification of the prescription due to medical or functional changes
- All second prostheses
- Major repairs involving modification of the prosthesis.

Accredited prescribers operating *outside the amputee clinic* (eg in private rooms) may issue prescriptions for:

- Routine replacement prostheses (ie requiring no functional modification to the prescription)
- Major repairs requiring no modification of the prescription.

Should a client presenting to a prescriber outside the amputee clinic prove to require modification of the original prescription/ prosthesis, that client should be referred to an accredited amputee clinic for a new prescription. The need to replace a prosthesis or socket is to be determined by the prescriber. Written justification for the replacement is to be included on the prescription and is to reflect the clinical decision making process.

10. RANGE OF PROSTHESES AVAILABLE

General Provisions: Componentry and prostheses styles as recommended by the NSW-ALS will be reviewed annually in order to comply with quality practices.

Second Prostheses: These are not available as a matter of routine. In each such case the prescriber must apply for the second prosthesis by way of an explanatory letter to accompany the prescription. They will be considered where:

- (a) Provision of a second prosthesis for use as a spare prosthesis while the primary prosthesis is being repaired in cases where the patient lives remote from the nearest accredited prosthetic manufacturer (> 3 hours by car) and this is likely to result in significant delay in the repair of their prosthesis; and the client or their dependents would be acutely compromised from the point of view of their self-care (ie., hygiene, toileting, eating and dressing) while the prosthesis is being repaired.
- (b) Provision of a second prosthesis for use in recreation for a client who is 16 years of age or under or is still attending school; and who is a dependent of a person who qualifies for a Health Care Card or a Commonwealth Seniors Health Card.
- (c) Provision of a second prosthesis for use at work for a client who qualifies for a Health Care Card or a Commonwealth Seniors Health Card if he/she is engaged in an occupation which could place undue stress on their usual prosthesis or would suffer economic loss by not being able to work while the prosthesis is being repaired or is unable to cope with the foot or articulated knee joint of their usual prosthesis in the work place.

Replaced Prostheses

- Replacement prostheses are provided through the NSW ALS as a result of the prosthesis in use becoming, **unsuitable and irreparable**. This can occur for a variety of reasons.
- It is important to note that after the prescription of a replacement prosthesis the NSW Artificial Limb Service will not approve use of the replaced prosthesis or any previously replaced prostheses provided under the Service. Replaced prostheses are automatically deemed as not suitable for use and are therefore considered expired. It should also be noted that the use of such replaced prostheses may be unsafe and cause injury. The use of replaced prostheses is done at the client's own risk.
- It **may** be appropriate for a replaced prosthesis to be worn for the short interim time that it takes for the replacement prosthesis to be manufactured only. This is a clinical decision and approval for this must be obtained from the prescribing doctor and accredited prosthetist.

- It is also very important for prostheses provided and approved for use under the NSW-ALS to be serviced regularly and for clients to have regular clinical review. Advice will be provided by the prescribing clinician and accredited prosthetist as to how often servicing of the prosthesis and clinical review is required. In addition clients are able to seek clinical review or review of their prosthesis at other times when they feel the need. Regular servicing of the prosthesis and clinical review helps to optimise function and life of the prosthesis.

Cosmetic Prostheses

These are generally not provided. They will though be able to be prescribed for patients who are unable to use a functional limb. They may be provided in some other circumstances for upper-limb amputees upon application from the prescriber.

Waterproofing

This is not usually provided under the NSW-ALS. On application from the prescriber approval for the waterproofing of an ALS prosthetic limb may be given for a client who qualifies for a Centrelink entitlement card as may be available from time to time if he/she;

- Is engaged in an occupation, which requires the wearing of a waterproof prosthesis and would suffer economic loss by not being able to work as a result of their prosthesis not being waterproofed; or
- Is 16 years of age or under or is still attending school.

Orthoses and/or Surgical Footwear

Orthoses (devices to support the body or a limb) and/or surgical footwear may be supplied where they are necessary for clients to gain effective use of the prosthesis. Such orthoses or surgical footwear must be prescribed by an accredited provider and are subject to ongoing review.

Interim Prostheses

Interim prostheses which are applied in the early post-operative stages are intended to assist in the management of the amputated residual limb and are not available under the ALS. These prostheses are an integral part of the amputee's rehabilitation management and are to be provided by the treating hospital.

Partial Hand or Foot Prostheses

Appliances that are not strictly "prostheses" may be issued through the NSW-ALS to clients with partial foot amputation, partial hand amputation and congenital limb deficiencies requiring an extension prostheses.

Limb Socks and Sheaths

Clients are provided with six limb socks per missing limb annually. Where special medical, personal or geographical circumstances exist, the NSW-ALS can exercise discretion in the matter of the type of sock and frequency and number of replacements. These provisions are not subject to client contributions.

11. APPROVAL AND ACQUITTAL PROVISIONS

Approval of Prescriptions: The NSW-ALS can authorise the manufacture or alteration of a prescription of an artificial limb provided the prescription form and any detailed written submission required have been completed and Client eligibility has been confirmed or in the

case of replacement prostheses / major repairs, client's eligibility has been confirmed and prosthesis ID checked against the NSW-ALS data base.

Ownership of Prostheses: The prosthesis/ es will become the property of the amputee.

Prosthesis Identification: All prostheses must have an identification code.

Repairs: Repairs may be performed according to a schedule established by the NSW-ALS and approved by the Department's Prosthetic Advisory Committee (PAC).

Acquittal of Prostheses and Major Repairs: As part of its quality assurance program, the NSW-ALS requires that all prescriptions be formally acquitted by a prescriber. The prescribing clinician must sign the acquittal form, which is to be completed in full before the prosthesis can be acquitted by the NSW-ALS. Clients are to acknowledge the importance of the acquittal process. The NSW-ALS reserves the right to exclude a client from the service if they do not comply with attendance at the acquittal. As part of the prescription process, clinics must inform the client of the need for acquittal.

12. MONITORING AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

In order for all clinics and limb manufacturers to have continued access to the NSW-ALS, active participation in quality improvement activities is a mandatory part of their accreditation process. Knowledge of outcomes is to be used in coordinating service delivery.

Clients are to be involved in the review of planning, delivery and evaluation of the services provided by the NSW-ALS.

Michael Reid
Director-General