



Discharge Planning

Community services and resources A guide for patients

The information below is general, specific details have not been provided as these often change. You can obtain current information from the phone book, on-line or discuss with your Social Worker.

Financial, compensation and legal issues

Financial worries can be very stressful, particularly at a time when you are also dealing with the life changing situation that has resulted in your admission to the Spinal Unit. Your Social Worker can advise about the range of financial assistance available to you. It is important to seek help early and get applications underway, as often these can take considerable time to be approved.

Centrelink

Tel: 13 27 17 or www.centrelink.gov.au – Disability, sickness, carer and mobility allowances

The following is a brief outline of financial assistance currently available to eligible people (many of Centrelink pensions and allowances are subject to means testing).

Disability Support Pension – Is available for people over the age of 16 and who have not reached Aged Pension age. The person must be assessed as being unfit to work for a period of at least 2 years.

Sickness Allowance / New start / Youth Allowance – One of these allowances will likely be appropriate for people over 16 years who have not reached Aged Pension age, but are temporarily unable to work or look for work. Your Social Worker will advise on which to apply for.

Carer Payment – Can be applied for once a discharge date is known and once the level of care is known. This allowance is for those individuals providing a significant amount of personal care for the person with a spinal cord injury (SCI) and is means tested. N.B. Generally people with paraplegia (excluding the elderly) are likely to be independent once discharged from hospital, and therefore may not be eligible.

Carer Allowance – Can be applied for once a discharge date is set and the needs of the person requiring care is known. This allowance is a supplementary payment if you provide care to an individual with SCI, and is not means tested. It can be paid on top of any other support payments, or income.

Mobility Allowance – Is paid to people with disabilities who are unable to use public transport without substantial assistance. The person must be spending at least 8 hours per week on a continuing basis in paid or voluntary work, vocational training or study. There are other benefits associated with this allowance such as access to a health care concession card.

Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA)

Contact 13 32 54, 1800 555 254 or www.dva.gov.au for information on disability pensions and allowances.

Workers Compensation

If injured whilst working, or in some cases travelling to and from work you may be eligible for compensation from WorkCover. It is important to liaise closely with your employer and get WorkCover involved early (your employer should have notified them of your accident, but it pays to check that this has been done). You will need to provide your employer with a first Medical Certificate which can be obtained from your first treating doctor. Your social worker can assist.

Insurance Commission of WA (ICWA) for Motor Vehicle Accidents

ICWA is the organisation responsible for insuring drivers through vehicle registration, and third party insurance. All people who have been involved in an accident should ensure that they, or their representative, have contacted ICWA either by phone, or online, to register the accident and your intention to make a claim. Generally drivers involved in single vehicle accidents are unlikely to be eligible for compensation, unless, they can prove negligence of some sort e.g. obscured road sign, dangerous, poorly maintained road surface. Passengers injured in single vehicle accidents are usually covered for compensation (assuming the car is registered). For multiple vehicle accidents police and ICWA will investigate to determine who was at fault. It is still recommended that an 'Intent to claim' form is lodged.

Pedestrians and pushbike riders involved in an accident with a motor vehicle can also make a claim.

It is usual for the Police Crash Investigation Unit and an investigator from ICWA to visit the ward to interview you. We believe it is better for this to happen once you are not under the influence of any medications which could affect your memory, and when you are able to sit up and talk face to face with the person interviewing you. If you have engaged the services of a lawyer you may wish to have them present for the interview. Some lawyers prefer to deal with ICWA on your behalf, and will advise against talking directly to the police or ICWA investigator.

Your Social Worker can provide you with written information regarding ICWA.

ICWA telephone: 0264 3333

Website: www.icwa.wa.gov.au or www.crashreport.com.au

Engaging a lawyer

To assist you in dealing with Workers Compensation, ICWA or in relation to any other compensation claim you have, you may wish to employ the services of a lawyer.

Whilst your Social Worker is not able to recommend anyone in particular you should consider the following and may wish to ask these questions of a prospective lawyer:

- How many cases like mine, (i.e. a person who has sustained severe spinal injuries) have you represented?

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- How successful have you been in getting compensation for people like me?
 - How do you work out how much compensation to ask for?
 - Do you require payment up front, or will your fees be taken out of any payout?
 - Are you prepared to interview me while I am in hospital?
 - How long will the process of getting compensation take?
 - I will be discharged before my claim for compensation is completed, what if I require money to pay for my care at home, or equipment. Can you arrange something in the interim?

Discharge planning

Personal care

Should you require assistance for personal care on discharge there are several options depending on your age and circumstances. Your Social Worker will be able to advise you on the most appropriate option for you.

Home and Community Care (HACC) – currently maximum of 6 hours per week so is best suited to individuals requiring ongoing minimal care. Available through a central referral point. Your Social Worker can assist in this.

Disability Services Commission Funding (DSC) – there are only three funding rounds per year. Applicants are those under retirement age (65 years) who require significant levels of care that is not available from other sources. Your social worker can assist in your application, but you must have attained your maximum rehabilitation potential before an application can be made. It frequently takes several attempts at applying for this funding before a person is successful. People needing DSC funding in order to live at home may need to consider alternative options such as, staying in the Quadriplegic Centre, or paying for private care, until they are successful in their funding application.

Aged Care Packages – For individuals of retirement age (65 years +) **EACH** (Extended Aged Care at Home) – High level care package of approximately 10–15 hours per week. **CACP** (Community Aged Care Package) – Low level care of approximately 6–10 hours per week.

In order to assess the level of care required the individual needs to have an assessment completed by the Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT) – your Social Worker will arrange this once you have attained your maximum level of functioning.

The care package you receive may influence your eligibility for equipment.

N.B. There is frequently a waiting list for care packages. Your Social Worker may be able to set up interim home care whilst you are waiting for a ‘package’ to commence.

For all of the above ‘home help’ (i.e. domestic assistance with cleaning, laundry and shopping) can be included in the package.

Admission to a permanent care facility

Over 65 years old – Should a person be unable to manage to go home due to their level of care requirements following a SCI, they may need to consider applying for admission to a Nursing Home or Hostel. Frequently there are waiting lists for admission to these facilities, and it may be necessary to be transferred to a transitional care facility, to wait until your preferred nursing home/hostel has a place for you. Your Social Worker can advise and assist with the process of getting approved for entry to a facility through the Department of Geriatric Medicine's Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT).

Quadriplegic Centre – Situated in Shenton Park the 'Quadriplegic Centre' offers temporary and respite accommodation for people with Spinal Cord Injury (primarily high level SCI). It has a gym, some occupational therapy and physiotherapy services, a recreation centre and trained nursing/care staff. The Quadriplegic Centre is frequently used by people who are waiting for funding to be approved from DSC, people waiting for housing modifications to be completed or for respite in order to give carers a break. Your Social Worker can arrange for you to visit the Quadriplegic Centre, and can assist in your application. There is a daily fee, but if on a pension you will receive rental assistance towards the cost of your stay. Your Social Worker can provide you with written information about the Quadriplegic Centre and their fees.

Community Group Home (under 65 years old) – If unable to go home due to lack of support a person may consider entering a group home. In order to do so, the applicant needs to apply to DSC for Accommodation Support funding. As with most applications to DSC there is often a considerable wait before funding is approved so alternatives need to be explored with your Social Worker.

Grants and allowances

Acute Spinal Cord Injury Grant

Pamphlets are available on the ward explaining the eligibility requirements for applying for this grant. This grant can be for a variety of uses e.g. assisting in purchasing equipment not already supplied through the hospital scheme, or to assist with financial demands incurred as a result of hospitalisation.

Thermoregulatory Dysfunction Energy Subsidy Scheme

A Western Australian Government subsidy to help offset the energy costs associated with temperature control at their home for financially disadvantaged persons with thermoregulatory dysfunction (usually high level spinal cord injured individuals). Financial assistance towards your electricity bill is available for individuals who hold a means tested concession card. Particular medical criteria must be met to be eligible. Your Social Worker can provide the application forms.

For more information – Phone: 9262 1373 or www.osr.wa.gov.au

Lotterywest Grant (Equipment for Living)

Applications for grants for specific equipment can be made through the Lotteries Commission. Equipment that may be applied for includes; electric bed, home gym, environmental control units, air conditioners, vehicle modifications, wheelchair carriers, and communication aids. Your Occupational Therapist can provide further information.

Web: www.ilc.com.au

Better Life Foundation WA

Is a not-for-profit charitable organisation focusing on the special needs of people with spinal conditions resulting from trauma (paraplegia and tetraplegia).

The foundation will consider funding applications for equipment that is not provided by any other agency. The applicant should not be eligible for compensation. For further details speak with your Occupational Therapist:

Tel: 9388 7744 or www.betterlifewa.com.au

At times other grants may become available. If you are struggling financially please ask talk to a social worker.

Transport

Maxi Taxis – These taxi's provide access for people in wheelchairs. They are very much in demand, and best booked in advance. Contact your local taxi service.

ACROD (Australian Council for Rehabilitation of Disabled) - This permit allows a person to park in a designated 'Disabled' parking bay. This can be issued for people requiring disabled parking on a short or long term basis. There is a small fee. Your Social Worker and Occupational Therapist can assist in this application. Please be aware that different councils have different regulations in relation to ACROD parking. You should contact your local council for details.

Taxi Users Subsidy Scheme (TUSS) – Is available for people who are permanently unable to get onto a bus with steps. The person will get 50% to 75% off the cost of a taxi fare (currently up to a maximum of \$25). There is no cost required, but 2 passport photographs, plus ID are needed at time of application. It is essential to apply for this ASAP following admission as day leave is part of rehabilitation, and you may need to travel in taxis when going on leave, which can prove expensive (It can take up to 6 weeks to get approval for TUSS).

New car or car parts GST free

Under current GST law purchase of a car (or car parts) is GST free where it is for use by an eligible person with a disability for their personal transportation, **to or from gainful employment**. The person must have lost the use of one, or more limbs, and be unable to use public transport – bus or train (not taxis) for the next 2 years. Contact Australian Tax Office online **www.ato.gov.au** for an application form. Your Doctor will need to complete the Medical Assessment form which is part of the application.

Licence fee exemption

Wheelchair hoist or ramp vehicles are currently eligible for a 100% licence fee exemption. You can apply for a vehicle modification permit at your local vehicle examination centre.

Companion Card – Is available for people who are permanently unable to attend community venues and activities without significant attendant support. With this card your companion will be allowed to enter participating venues at no cost. Your Companion is also able to use this card to access public transport when travelling with you. Your Social Worker can assist with this application.

Public Transport

Bus Travel: Many Transperth buses are wheelchair accessible however it is advisable to check the bus timetable to ensure that an accessible bus services the route you wish to travel on.

Train travel: You will need to contact 1800 800 022 in advance to check that the station you are wishing to use has a level platform onto the train. Transperth staff can organise ramps to be available if necessary.

Patient Assisted Travel Scheme (PATS)

Provides assistance to country residents who have to travel more than 100km to access specialist medical treatment. Application for PATS must be made before you travel, and should be approved by your GP or consultant. Contact should be made to your local PATS office usually situated in your nearest hospital.

Driving

Your capacity to return to, or to commence driving will depend on the impact of your Spinal Cord Injury, and your previous driving status.

You must get your Doctor (Consultant) to complete an M107A which notifies the Department of Transport of your injury.

He/she may indicate:

- ▀ that you are safe to return to your previous driving status.
- ▀ that you require a driving assessment to determine if you are able to drive an unmodified vehicle or what types of modifications are required.
- ▀ that you need to relearn to drive a vehicle using hand controls.

As a result, you may need to give up your previous licence, and recommence with a learners permit, to learn how to control a vehicle using modified controls.

Then you will need to discuss with your Occupational Therapist about referral to the Independent Living Centre where they can conduct the driving assessment, and also assist with funding of modifications to a vehicle, and referral for lessons if you meet funding eligibility criteria.

Information is available about possible vehicle modifiers and driving schools through your Occupational Therapist.

Housing options

Own home – Your Occupational Therapist will arrange an assessment of your home and recommend modifications. A small hospital grant is available to assist with any modifications necessary for access and hygiene needs. However these modifications are usually only completed after discharge, so a temporary set up may be necessary to enable you to go home.

Department of Housing (Homeswest) – You may be in a position where you need to consider an application to the Department of Housing, for wheelchair accessible accommodation. Your social worker will be able to advise you of the process and will assist with your application. N.B. Even if applying for priority housing it can take 12+ months for suitable accommodation to become available, so you must endeavour to arrange alternative short term/temporary accommodation before your discharge.

Private rental / buying a new home – Before contacting real estate agents you may wish to discuss with your Occupational Therapist about your basic requirements for wheelchair accessible housing. Your Occupational Therapist will be able to give you written information for the agent to help them source an appropriate property for you.

Crisis care and support services

Perth Home Care – Crisis Care Service

Tel: 9244 5411

Offers short term emergency support for aged or younger people with disabilities. The service supports the main carer in the event of critical illness, or any other event that means the carer cannot carry out their carer activities. Emergency contact is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Red Cross Carer Respite Centre

Tel: 1800 059 059

Carer respite is a Commonwealth funded program, specifically to assist with short term respite options for carers of people with disabilities. This respite can be in-home or out-of-home.

Commonwealth Carelink Centres

Tel: 1800 052 222 or www.commcarelink.health.gov.au

Provide information on many local services for people with a disability e.g. personal and nursing care, household help, meals, transport and support groups.

Silver Chain

Tel: 9242 0242

Assistance in nursing, personal care, home help, independence programs, social support, physiotherapy and podiatry.

Private care agencies

There are many private agencies that are able to offer personal care, home help, shopping and respite services. These agencies are suitable for those people who have compensation, or continue to receive a regular income. Fees per hour are on average around \$35 (Monday to Friday during the day). Extra cost is incurred during the evening, over night and at weekends. Please look up in your telephone directory under nursing agencies, online or alternatively contact the Commonwealth Carelink Centre for agencies in your area.

Tel: 1800 052 222

Carers WA

Provide support and education for carers living in WA. They offer counselling over the phone plus the opportunity to meet with other carers. Your Social Worker can provide you with written information. At times education sessions from support workers at Carers WA are offered within the hospital.

Tel: 1300 227 377

24 hour counselling service: 1800 022 022

People with Disabilities WA Inc

Is the peak lobby group for people with disabilities in WA. It provides a range of services including advocacy and community education.

Tel: 1800 193 331 or [www.http://pwdwa.org](http://pwdwa.org)

Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre (EDAC)

Is a community based service whose core business is to advocate for, and empower multicultural people with disabilities.

Tel: 9388 7455 or www.edac.org.au

Disability Services Commission (DSC)

Is the State Government Agency responsible for advancing opportunities and quality of life for people with disabilities who are under the age of 65 years. DSC provides a range of services and supports to people with disabilities and their carers, often through non-government agencies. The Local Area Coordinator (LAC) is the local support in the community. They assist people to plan, select and receive needed supports and services. To contact the LAC in your area.

Tel: 9426 9200 or www.disability.wa.gov.au

Paraplegic-Quadriplegic Association (PQA) of WA, located in Shenton Park

Provides a variety of services to the Spinal Cord Injury community.

PQA Homecare – Provide care for people in their own homes. Can also assist people in applying for DSC funding.

Tel: 9381 0111

The Quadriplegic Centre provides a range of long and short term residential care options, including respite for people with high level SCI.

Tel: 9381 0144

The Selby Recreation Centre offers activities for people with SCI who are living within the community. These include, but are not limited to, painting, pottery, cooking, guest speakers and computer education.

Tel: 9381 0173

Advocacy services for people with SCI.

Tel: 9381 0176

Disability Equipment Grants – Will assist in application of grants from Lotterywest.

Tel: 9381 0176

Holiday homes – Bunbury and Geraldton (wheelchair accessible).

Tel: 9381 0173

Elba Incorporated: Is a not-for-profit organisation whose primary focus is the provision of care to SCI people living in the community. They are also able to assist people in applying for DSC funding through the Combined Application Process.

Tel: 9316 9944 or www.elba.net.au

Contact

State Rehabilitation Service

Fiona Stanley Hospital

11 Robin Warren Drive, Murdoch WA 6150

Phone Helpdesk: (08) 6152 2222

www.fsh.health.wa.gov.au

Compiled: Jan Hansen, Social Worker, Royal Perth Hospital, 2013
Reviewed: Fiona Stanley Hospital, State Rehabilitation Service, 2015
Publication number–FSH A 0000746

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