

2024 Stoma Appliance Scheme Review
Head and Neck Cancer Australia's response to public consultation
October 2024

Head and Neck Cancer Australia is the only national charity in Australia dedicated to providing free evidence-based information, education, support and advocacy for people affected by Head and Neck Cancer.

Head and Neck Cancer is not one type of cancer. It is a complex and diverse group of cancers that can affect a person's mouth, tongue, throat, salivary glands, skin or voice box.

In 2023 over 5,300 people were diagnosed with a type of Head and Neck Cancer and approximately 17,000 people diagnosed in the last five years are living with the side effects of treatment. With an ageing population and advances in diagnosis and treatment, the number of people living with Head and Neck Cancer continues to rise (Cancer Australia).

It is estimated there are currently around 1,200 laryngectomees in Australia: people who have had a total laryngectomy. A total laryngectomy is used for larger cancers that cannot be treated with a smaller operation and involves removing the whole voice box. A laryngectomy has a major effect on a person's life changing the way a person talks, breaths and looks.

People living with a permanent neck stoma require essential supplies including:

- Voice Prosthesis
- Heat Moisture Exchangers (HMEs), stoma covers and HME attachment devices/adhesive seals/baseplates
- Laryngectomy Respiratory Consumables - HME attachment devices & accessories

As the leading Head and Neck Cancer patient advocacy group in Australia, we are aware of significant challenges faced by laryngectomees in several states accessing essential supplies due to:

- no funding scheme available - South Australia, Western Australia
- insufficient funding and / or inflexible funding schemes that do not meet the needs of patients
- barriers to accessing funding schemes (e.g. NSW has a joining fee to access EnableNSW)

The solution

While further work is required to inform the exact number of people in Australia who do not have access to essential laryngectomy supplies, we strongly support equality of funding to be available across Australia for all laryngectomees, regardless of where a person lives, to ensure access to products that are clinically necessary for the management of their neck stoma and improve quality of life.

Our close engagement and collaboration with laryngectomees and leading healthcare professionals who dedicate their days to caring for laryngectomees demonstrates that we are well placed to

provide input on policy matters, identify service gaps and draw on our extensive collaborations with a wide range of stakeholders to address these gaps to improve outcomes for people affected by Head and Neck Cancer.

We would welcome the opportunity for members of the laryngectomy community including patient, carer and clinical representatives to provide further information and answer any questions.

W: <http://www.headandneckcancer.org.au>

Sources

1, 2 Head and Neck Cancer: [Cancer Australia](#)