

Disability equipment funding program – guidelines and procedures

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1. Introduction

The Department of Education (department) Disability Equipment Funding Program (the program) has been established to provide equipment to children with disabilities in Northern Territory (NT) Government schools. This document outlines roles and responsibilities of all relevant stakeholders and specifies procedures to be followed in applying for funding and managing the equipment.

The department’s Framework for Inclusion (2019-2029) states that:

Children and students experience inclusive education when they can access and fully participate in learning, alongside their similarly aged peers, supported by reasonable adjustments and teaching strategies tailored to meet their individual needs. Inclusion is embedded in all aspects of school life, and is supported by culture, policies, and everyday practices.

Through the funding of equipment, department facilitates inclusion in the classroom and the attainment of educational goals.

The funding is provided through the furniture, fittings and equipment budget of the department’s Infrastructure Planning and Investment. Requests for funding can be lodged at any time of the year, whenever equipment is needed.

2. Definitions

Term	Definition
Child	A person less than 18 years of age, or a person apparently less than 18 years of age if the person’s age cannot be proved, as defined in the <i>Care and Protection of Children Act 2007</i> .
Disability	<p>In relation to a person, refers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • total or partial loss of the person’s bodily or mental functions • total or partial loss of a part of the body • the presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness • the presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness • the malfunction, malformation, or disfigurement of a part of the person’s body • a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction • a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person’s thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment, or that results in disturbed behaviour <p>and includes a disability that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presently exists • previously existed but no longer exists • may exist in the future including because of a genetic predisposition to that disability

Term	Definition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is imputed to a person. <p>These definitions come from the <i>Disability Standards for Education 2005</i> (Cth) and <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i> (Cth).</p>
Equipment	Specialised equipment used to facilitate or enhance a child's ability to access and participate in school and school-related activities, such as mobile hoist, standing frame, and Little Room.
Parent	A child's father, mother or any other person who has parental responsibility for that child, including a person who is regarded as a parent of the child under Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island customary law or tradition.
Personalised Plan	An umbrella term, refers to a plan that details adjustments, accommodations, strategies, approaches, or school staff actions and responses for a child with additional needs. Personalised Plans include, but are not limited to, Education adjustment plan and Student health care plan.
Prescriber	An allied health professional or a medical practitioner who is registered with the appropriate regulatory body.
Prescription	An instruction written by a prescriber that authorises a child to be issued with equipment.
School	An NT Government school and includes preschool.
Trial	To test of a piece of equipment to assess its performance and suitability.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1. Student Wellbeing and Inclusion Programs and Services

Student Wellbeing and Inclusion Programs and Services (SWIPS) is responsible for:

- ensuring standard procedure for SWIPS, as outlined in Section 10.1, is followed
- responding to queries from stakeholders regarding the program
- assessing equipment funding requests from schools
- ensuring equipment servicing and minor repairs are current whilst in storage and before distribution to a child
- maintaining an up-to-date database of all equipment.

3.2. Infrastructure Planning and Investment

Infrastructure Planning and Investment is responsible for:

- reimbursing a school for its purchase of the equipment, upon receipt of the Equipment agreement, the Tax invoice, and the Acquittal form, as per standard procedures.

3.3. Principals

Principals are responsible for:

- confirming with the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) that the child cannot access the required equipment through their National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) package
- ensuring standard procedure for school, as outlined in section 10.3, is followed
- confirming that any child to be involved in the program has been referred to SWIPS and meets eligibility criteria
- purchasing the equipment in line with the [NTG Procurement Governance Policy and Procurement Rules](#)
- facilitating relevant staff training and keeping an appropriate record of the training
- contacting the prescriber when a school staff member notes any developmental change or emotional response of the child that is likely to impact the use of the equipment and keeping parents informed
- ensuring the equipment will not be taken home, and in most cases, will not leave the school grounds.

3.4. Prescriber

The prescriber is responsible for:

- ensuring standard procedure for prescriber as outlined in section 10.1 is followed
- notifying stakeholders, school and family, if application is successful or unsuccessful
- sourcing equipment to trial with a child if the required equipment is not available from department storage
- assessing a child's need for equipment and prescribing appropriate equipment for the child to access education
- ensuring equipment prescription is within their scope of practice defined by a relevant national board under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme
- conducting training for school staff and providing them with instructions for using the equipment. Instructions may be in different forms, such as face-to-face demonstration or video clip, depending on the complexity of the equipment and on the preferences of school staff
- reviewing the use of the equipment within 6 to 12 months of equipment suitability being established.

3.5. Parents

Parents are responsible for:

- assisting the school and the prescriber with assessment of the need for equipment and with equipment prescription
- informing the NDIS Local Area Coordinator, NDIA Planner or ECEI Coordinator of any aids or equipment that is currently used at home and at school or is likely to be required in the future.

4. Eligibility criteria

A child must meet the following criteria to be eligible for equipment funding:

- the child is attending an NTG school or preschool
- the child has a diagnosed disability and has been referred to SWIPS
- the child requires specialised equipment prescribed by an allied health professional or a medical practitioner to access education.

A child is not eligible for equipment funding if:

- the child is attending a prior-to-school setting, such as a childcare centre or the Families as first teachers (FaFT) program
- the equipment requested is less than \$500
- the equipment requested is a whole-of-life need and is required by the child regardless of the activity undertaken, in addition to reasonable adjustment obligations of the school, such as a communication device or an assistive hearing device
- the equipment requested does not directly enable the child's access to education
- the request is for a computer or a tablet.

Note that disability equipment funding may be awarded in exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of SWIPS.

5. Trial of equipment

It is expected that any equipment funded through this program will be trialled with the child in the school setting before it is allocated to the child.

If there is an item in department storage that may be suitable, the prescriber can contact SWIPS to arrange a 2 to 4 weeks trial. To do this the prescriber can complete the Disability equipment funding request form in consultation with the school principal, and SWIPS will contact the prescriber to facilitate the trial. If the trial is successful, the equipment can then be allocated to the child via standard procedures.

If an item that is potentially suitable is not in department storage, the prescriber will source the equipment to conduct the trial to access its suitability. If the trial is successful, a request for new purchase can then be submitted to SWIPS.

6. Storage of equipment

When the equipment is not in use, it needs to be stored in a suitable, preferably air-conditioned location. This prevents the deterioration of materials.

7. Return of equipment

Equipment that is no longer used must be returned to SWIPS. Schools are responsible for contacting SWIPS to organise the return of the equipment with all components such as batteries, lap belts and tray tables. The equipment should be cleaned and in good working order when it is returned.

8. Transfer of equipment

If the child is moving to a new school within the NT, the current school will contact SWIPS who will assist with the transfer of the equipment. A new Equipment agreement will be issued to the new school.

9. Monitoring

SWIPS will monitor the condition and allocation of the equipment periodically. Schools are required to maintain, service and repair the equipment at their own cost as per manufacturer's advice and to keep appropriate records.

10. Procedures

This section outlines standard procedures to be followed by SWIPS, the school, and the prescriber.

All procedures are available as printable flowcharts. Please see section 12.1, Supporting documents, to access.

10.1. Procedure for prescribers

Prescriber procedure steps:

1. Receive a request from school or parent.
2. Conduct assessment and investigate equipment in consultation with school and parent.
3. Check with SWIPS to determine if the potential equipment is in department storage.
4. If the potential equipment is in department storage:
 - complete Disability equipment funding request form requesting trial
 - provide training to school staff on equipment use and facilitate a 2-to-4-week trial
 - if the trial is successful, notify SWIPS then go to step 6
 - if the trial is unsuccessful, go to step 5.
5. If the potential equipment is not in department storage or trial of department equipment was unsuccessful:
 - arrange loan of potential equipment to conduct a trial to ensure it meets all the functional, environmental, and school needs. Loan may be through commercial provider, from another school or other sources.
 - following a successful trial complete the Disability equipment funding request form requesting new purchase
 - set up the equipment with the child and all relevant school staff to ensure safe implementation
 - conduct training on equipment use to all relevant school staff and provide them with instructions.
6. Review the use of equipment in 6 to 12 months.

10.2. Procedure for SWIPS

SWIPS procedure steps:

1. Liaise with prescriber regarding availability of equipment in department storage.
 - If equipment is in department storage, liaise with prescriber to arrange and facilitate a 2-to-4-week trial.
 - If equipment is not in department storage, prescriber will source equipment to facilitate a 2-to-4-week trial.
2. Receive and review Disability equipment funding request form submitted by school following a successful trial.
3. For successful applications:
 - if the potential equipment is coming from department storage, and the trial is successful, send Equipment agreement to school
 - if the equipment is not from department storage and must be purchased, send Approval notification, Equipment agreement, asset number and Acquittal form to school with cc to infrastructure.DET@education.nt.gov.au.
4. For unsuccessful applications, notify the prescriber of the outcome.
5. Maintain records of allocation of equipment on the Support Services Information Database, TRM and equipment register.
6. Transfer equipment when the child is moving to a new school
7. Collect equipment when it is no longer required.

10.3. Procedure for schools and principals

School and principal procedure steps:

1. If a need is identified that a student requires specialised equipment, ensure confirmation is received from the NDIA that the student cannot access this equipment through their NDIS package.
2. Contact a prescriber to undertake an assessment of the student.
3. In collaboration with the prescriber, complete a 2-to-4-week trial of the equipment. The prescriber will source the equipment and facilitate relevant training for staff.
4. Following the trial, sign the Disability equipment funding request form that the prescriber has prepared and submit to support.det@education.nt.gov.au.
5. Once approved by SWIPS:
 - If the equipment will be borrowed from SWIPS, complete the Equipment funding agreement and return to SWIPS then facilitate relevant staff training, with prescriber, on equipment use
 - If the equipment is to be purchased, arrange purchase, label equipment with provided asset number and send photos, Equipment funding agreement, Tax invoice and Acquittal form to support.det@education.nt.gov.au and infrastructure.DET@education.nt.gov.au then facilitate relevant staff training, with prescriber, on equipment use.
6. Document the use of equipment in the child's personalised plan.

7. Arrange and fund equipment maintenance, servicing and minor repairs whilst in use and keep records.
8. Advise SWIPS when the equipment is no longer required or the child is moving to a new school.

11. Contacts

Student Wellbeing and Inclusion Programs and Services
Inclusion and Engagement Services
Email: support.det@education.nt.gov.au

Infrastructure Planning and Investment
Email: Infrastructure.DET@education.nt.gov.au

12. Related documents, legislation, policy and resources

12.1. Supporting documents

The supporting documents are required in the process of applying for and acquitting disability equipment funding.

- [Disability equipment funding request form](#)
- [Flowcharts outlining procedures for SWIPS, schools and prescribers](#)
- FFE Acquittal template – staff access only
- Equipment approval and agreement – sample – staff access only

12.2. Legislation

[Care and Protection of Children Act 2007](#)

[Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \(Cth\)](#) – promotes the elimination of discrimination against persons on the grounds of disability, ensure people with disability have the same rights to equity before the law and promote recognition and acceptance that people with disability have the same fundamental rights as the rest of the community.

[Disability Standards for Education 2005 \(Cth\)](#) – makes explicit the obligations of education and training service providers under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the rights of people with disabilities in relation to education and training.

[National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013 \(Cth\)](#)

[Education Act 2015](#) – promotes the high-quality contemporary education to develop students' potential and maximise their educational achievement.

[Education and Care Services \(National Uniform Legislation\) Act 2011](#) – sets a national standard for children's education and care across Australia.

12.3. Policies and guidelines

[Department of Education Framework for Inclusion 2019-29](#)

[Diagnostic assessment guidelines](#)

[Enrolment in Special Schools and Special Centres Guidelines](#)

[Students with Disability Policy](#)

[Students with Disability Guidelines](#)

12.4. Resources

[Allied Health Practitioner Agreement of Service](#)

[External Practitioner Checklist for Principals](#)

[General Principles of Practice and Cultural Competence](#)

[Little Room](#)

[Recommended Structure of a Report by an External Practitioner](#)

[Occupational Therapy Board of Australia Code of Conduct](#)

[Physiotherapy Board of Australia Code of Conduct](#)

[National Disability Insurance Scheme: Information Package for Service Providers](#)

[Principles to Determine the Responsibilities of the NDIS and Other Service Systems](#)

Acronyms	Full form
<u>Cth</u>	Commonwealth
ECEI	Early Childhood Early Intervention
FaFT	Families as first teachers
FFE	Furniture, fittings and equipment
NDIA	National Disability Insurance Agency
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NT	Northern Territory
SWIPS	Student Wellbeing and Inclusion Programs and Services
TRM	Territory Records Manager

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1	January 2021	Student Wellbeing and Inclusion	First release
2	November 2022	Student Wellbeing and Inclusion Programs and Services	Administrative amendments to align roles and responsibilities to the structural alignment in effect from 1 July 2022, including NTG template and minor formatting.