



The Australian Council of Stoma Associations Inc.

Patron: His Excellency General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd)
ABN 12 516 756 556

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Richard B. McNair
President, ASPOA
75A Dunlop Road,
Te Puke,
New Zealand.3119

Dear Richard,

It was wonderful to meet you and the other members of the ASPOA Executive at the recent ASPOA conference in Seoul, South Korea and congratulations from the Australian Council of Stoma Associations on your election as President.

Ostomates in Australia are in the enviable position of receiving subsidised stoma products through the Department of Health's Stoma Appliance Scheme (SAS). This program was established in 1975 and provides support to people with a stoma by improving access to the most suitably and clinically appropriate stoma related products. To receive subsidised stoma products a person must:

- Have a temporary or permanent body opening (whether natural or surgically created), which facilitates the removal of urine and products of the gastrointestinal tract where the person does not have normal gastrointestinal tract or bladder functions;
- Become a member to one of the 22 regional based stoma association; and
- Hold a SAS entitlement card issued by the government

The SAS schedule list products that have been approved by the Department of Health to be issued to eligible people. The schedule determines the maximum quantity a person can receive each month. Eligible people may use products not listed on the schedule, however the product must be purchased outside of the scheme from the supplier.

Typically, a member would place an order with their stoma association each month. The association would purchase enough stock from the suppliers to fulfil these orders and then distribute it to their members. Members have a choice of having their order posted to them or collecting it from the associations premises. A claim is then sent to the government for reimbursement of the issued stock. The current cost of the scheme is more than AUD\$80 Million per year.

This program has been working well for many years however the government's efforts to control the cost of the scheme has forced associations to become more efficient and to pass on costs incurred that are not covered by the scheme, for example postage costs for parcel delivery.

These regional associations are run on a mixture of paid and volunteer staff, almost all of which are ostomates or the close family member of an ostomate. In addition to providing the product delivery service associations provide peer support to new and long term ostomates. Most associations also run various support groups.

The Australian Council of Stoma Associations (ACSA) represents at a national level the interests of these 22 member associations. The role of ACSA is to liaise with the government in relation to the SAS, coordinate ostomy related services throughout Australia provide advocacy for persons living with a stoma in Australia. ACSA also publishes a national journal "Ostomy Australia".

One of the weaknesses of the scheme in its current form is the availability, for ostomates, of regular reviews of their stoma by a Stomal Therapy Nurse (STN). Almost all the STN in Australia are employed in either the private or public hospital system. Unless an ostomate is in hospital (or was recently discharged) they are unable to get an appointment. ACSA has begun working with the Department of Health to remedy this and it is hoped that in time regular access to stomal therapists will become part of the stoma appliance scheme.

ACSA recognises the excellent support ostomates in Australia receive and in response to a proposal put to ACSA in 2001 by IOA that we should help those who are less fortunate the Australia Fund was established. Through the Australia Fund the 22 associations in Australia have been aiding ostomates in countries where they have serious difficulties or hardships in obtaining or affording basic ostomy supplies.

The fund seeks to provide effective practical assistance to disadvantaged ostomates anywhere in the world by donating basic ostomy appliances, training stomal therapy nurses and other medical professionals in stoma care and fostering development of local self-help facilities.

In the last 12 months, the Australia Fund has continued to provide ongoing assistance to:

- Indonesia (2 locations)
- Philippines (3 locations)
- Papua New Guinea
- Fiji
- Malaysia
- Mongolia
- East Timor
- Kenya (5 locations)

These existing projects which are being actively supported by association coordinators are progressing well however some of the above destinations have lost their local coordinator and delays have occurred in getting details of replacements and ensuring they are familiar with Australia Fund procedures.

It should be noted that ostomy appliances are normally only provided through ostomy associations, hospitals, community organisations or health care professionals in the country or region being assisted. These organisations are expected to take responsibility for the distribution of appliances free of charge to ostomates in the area who cannot afford to purchase them.

Inquiries for assistance from the Australia Fund may be forwarded to Gerald Barry, Acting Administration Coordinator, email gabarry@bigpond.com.

Yours faithfully



David Munro

Vice President

Australian Council of Stoma Associations