

Non-electronic Communication Aid Scheme (NECAS)

GUIDELINES

Contents Page

Section 1

| | | |
|-----|---------------------------|--------|
| 1.1 | Purpose of the Guidelines | Page 3 |
| 1.2 | Background information | Page 3 |
| 1.3 | Aims of NECAS | Page 3 |
| 1.4 | Where is NECAS located? | Page 4 |

Section 2

| | | |
|-----|---------------------------------------|--------|
| 2.1 | Who can access NECAS? | Page 5 |
| 2.2 | What are complex communication needs? | Page 5 |
| 2.3 | What does NECAS provide? | Page 5 |

Section 3

| | | |
|-----|---|--------|
| 3.1 | The role of the person requesting the service | Page 7 |
| 3.2 | Application process for individualised requests | Page 7 |
| 3.3 | Application process for projects | Page 8 |
| 3.4 | The use of photos | Page 8 |

Section 4

| | | |
|-----|---|---------|
| 4.1 | Drafts of communication aids | Page 9 |
| 4.2 | Additional copies of communication aids | Page 9 |
| 4.3 | Replacement communication aids | Page 9 |
| 4.4 | Changes to the communication aid | Page 9 |
| 4.5 | Translations | Page 10 |
| 4.6 | Outsourcing of equipment and materials | Page 10 |

Section 5

| | | |
|-----|---|---------|
| 5.1 | Priority of Access to non-electronic communication aids | Page 11 |
| 5.2 | What if there is a complaint? | Page 12 |
| 5.3 | Client records and privacy principles | Page 12 |
| 5.4 | Ownership of equipment | Page 12 |

Section 6

| | | |
|-----|------------------------------------|---------|
| 6.1 | Acknowledgments | Page 13 |
| 6.2 | References and further Information | Page 13 |

Section 1

1.1 Purpose of the Guidelines

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide a framework for the Non-electronic Communication Aid Scheme (NECAS), funded by the Department of Human Services (DHS) Victoria.

Two additional documents accompany these guidelines and they can be found on the Scope website www.scopevic.org.au. These documents are:

1. NECAS Service Request form; requests information about the person's communication skills, the communication aid required and contact details
2. How to design a communication aid - Handout; provides information about how to appropriately design non-electronic communication aids for individuals and provides details of some example communication aids

1.2 Background information.

Communication is of primary importance and takes many forms. Communication includes speech however there are some people with complex communication needs who have speech that is not functional to meet their daily communication needs. The importance of services and supports for people with complex communication needs is recognised by the Victorian Government. This is demonstrated through funding for the Victorian Aids and Equipment Program, Electronic Communication Devices Scheme (VAEP:ECD Scheme) and the Communication Access Network (CAN).

The Non-electronic Communication Aid Scheme (NECAS) commenced as a pilot project in 2005 to determine the need for non-electronic communication aids for adults in Victoria. In 2007, Scope's Communication Resource Centre was selected as the ongoing provider of NECAS. NECAS commenced as a recurrently funded program in January 2008.

1.3 Aims of NECAS

NECAS is a statewide service that provides non-electronic communication aids to adults with complex communication needs. The focus of this is to enhance communication, participation and independence for people with complex communication needs.

1.4 Where is the NECAS located?

NECAS is situated in Scope's Communication Resource Centre. The Communication Resource Centre is funded by the Department of Human Services and is part of the Communication Access Network (CAN) in Victoria for people with complex communication needs. The aim of the Communication Resource Centre and the Communication Access Network is to ensure that people with communication difficulties and their communication partners, communicate successfully and effectively.

Section 2

2.1 Who can access NECAS?

Priority for the provision of non-electronic communication aids will be given to people who meet all of the following criteria:

- Adults who are a permanent resident of Victoria and hold a Medicare card
- Adults who have complex communication needs, (*see definition below*)
- Adults who are able to access services under the Disability Act (2006)

2.2 What are complex communication needs?

People with complex communication needs have communication problems associated with a wide range of physical, sensory and environmental causes which restrict/limit their ability to participate independently in society. They either cannot speak or have speech that is difficult to understand. Some people may also have difficulty understanding spoken language. They and their partners may benefit from using augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) methods either temporarily or permanently. (Balandin, S., 2002.)

People with complex communication needs may have intellectual, physical and sensory disabilities, acquired brain injury and neurological impairments.

People who are **NOT** eligible to receive funding through the Non-electronic Communication Aids Scheme include:

- people eligible for supports through the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) or the Transport Accident Commission (TAC)
- people who receive support through compensation related to their disability
- pre-school and school aged children (children who are transitioning from school to an adult placement may be considered on an individual basis)

2.3 What does NECAS provide?

NECAS provides:

- telephone support to people designing individualised communication aids
- advice and information on Speech Pathology services available in Victoria for adults
- manufacturing of individualised non-electronic communication aids
- information and advice through a variety of strategies including forums and open days

NECAS **does not** provide:

- electronic communication aids, computer hardware or software
- programming of electronic communication devices
- sensory-focused resources (eg. sensory books, leisure packs and exploration mats) which are not considered individualised expressive or receptive communication aids
- funding or services for the mounting of communication aids
- general group program resources
- assessment of a person's communication needs
- ongoing Speech Pathology support and consultancy
- individualised training on the use of communication aids

It is recommended that a speech pathologist support the NECAS service request. If this is not an option, the person requesting the service should have knowledge and skills in selecting and designing appropriate communication aids. If a request is made which requires speech pathology support, NECAS will endeavour to link people into locally based speech pathology services. These include Regional Communication Services, DHS Services, Yooralla, Scope, Community Health Centres etc.

Please Note: There is funding available for people of all ages to receive electronic communication aids through the Victorian Aids and Equipment Program: Electronic Communication Devices Scheme (VAEP:ECD Scheme)

Phone: 03 9362 6154

Website: www.yooralla.com.au

Section 3

3.1 The role of the person requesting the service

The role of the person requesting the service is to:

- select and design a communication aid that is suitable
- support the application
- support the implementation of the communication aid

More information

- Non-electronic Communication Aid Design Handout.
www.scopevic.org.au (go to resources ► NECAS)

3.2 Application process for individual requests

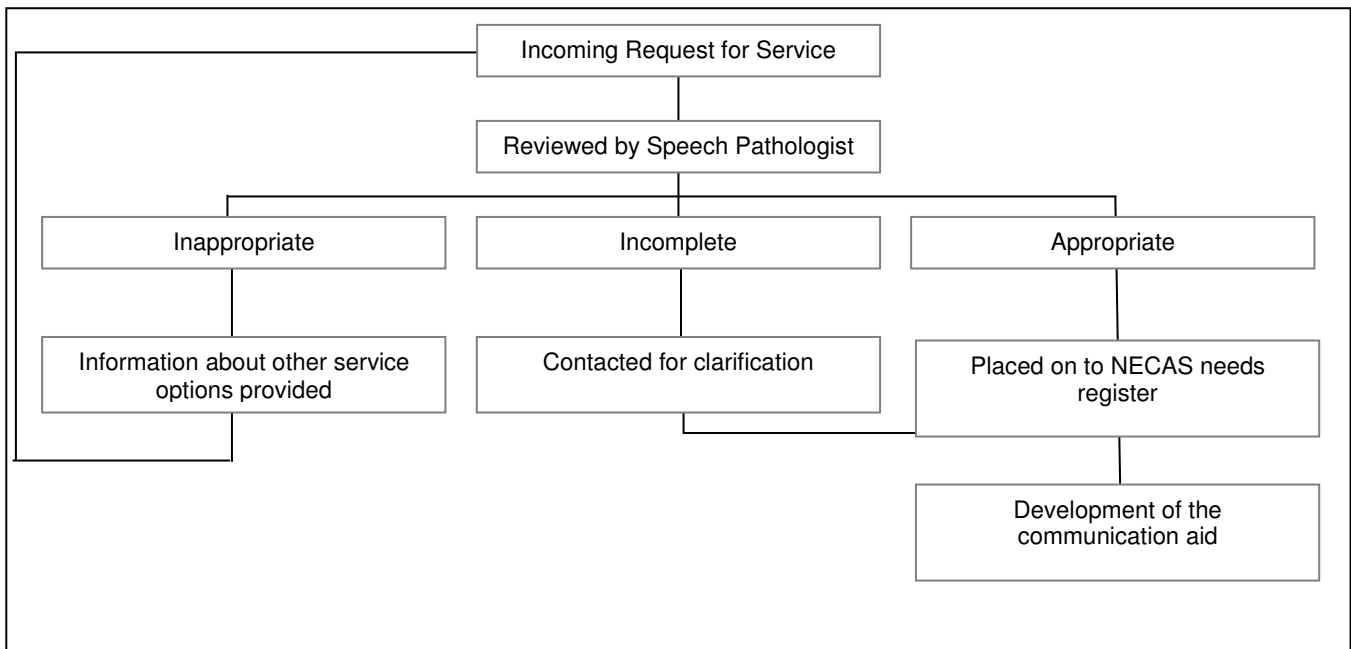


Table 1: Process for individual requests

| Activity | Approximate timelines (from receipt of request) |
|--|--|
| Request received and file made up | Within 1 day |
| Request reviewed by a speech pathologist and contacted for clarification (if required) | Within 1 week |
| Request is put onto the NECAS needs register | Within 1 week |
| Development of the draft communication aid | Within 4-6 weeks |
| Final version of the communication aid completed | Within 2 weeks of receiving the draft |

Table 2: approximate timelines

Those applicants waiting longer than the timelines outlined previously will receive notification either via phone, email or letter to inform them of the revised timelines and expected completion date.

NECAS will organise the delivery of the aid to the nominated delivery address, as specified on the Service Request Form.

3.3 Application process for projects

NECAS will support a minimum of one community capacity building project per year, if funding allows. Projects will be identified and selected on an annual basis. Priority will be given to projects that:

- involve people with complex communication needs
- focus on making communities more inclusive for people with complex communication needs
- improve communication access for people with complex communication needs to community services
- have statewide implications
- work in partnership with key stakeholders.

3.4 The use of photos

NECAS, in most cases, has generic photos for use in communication aids. These may include generic food items, objects and logos.

For photos of specific people, objects or logos the following guidelines apply:

- If possible, photos should be provided in an electronic format – either on a CD-Rom or emailed at the time of the request for service.
- If an electronic format is not available, NECAS can organise to scan the photos, however, this process will take more time and resources from the allocation to the individual.
- All photos included with an application must be named, numbered and clearly labelled, with reference to the Service Request Form to ensure that NECAS staff are aware of their placement on the communication aid requested.

Section 4

4.1 Drafts of communication aids

Each applicant is able to request one draft of the communication aid for review. The draft is sent out to the person requesting the communication aid. When feedback is received from the applicant, the communication aid is then finalised and sent to the applicant. In cases where substantial changes or more than one draft is required, the request may be placed back on the needs register when this subsequent request is received.

4.2 Additional copies of communication aids

In circumstances where people require an additional copy of the communication aid, this must be made clear on the original Service Request Form or via a detailed email. The request will be considered on an individual basis. Should the request for an additional copy be refused, a copy of the aid can be supplied on a CD Rom (either in its original format or in PDF format) so that the applicant may source an additional copy elsewhere.

4.3 Replacement communication aids

If an identical replacement communication aid is required due to overuse, damage or loss, an additional service request must be made via a detailed email. The request will be considered on an individual basis and the applicant will be notified of the outcome. Should the request for a replacement copy be refused, a copy of the aid can be supplied on a CD Rom (either in its original format or in PDF format) so that the applicant may source a replacement copy elsewhere. However, if there are significant changes to be made to the aid, a Service Request Form will need to be completed and submitted.

4.4 Changes to the communication aid

NECAS recognises that communication needs change over time. Therefore, people may require changes and alterations be made to existing communication aids. Where substantial changes are required, an additional Service Request Form will need to be completed and submitted. If only minor changes (less than 5) are required, NECAS can be contacted to discuss the request.

4.5 Translations

Requests will be considered on an individual basis. Every attempt will be made to provide communication aids in languages other than English. In cases where translation is required, it is recommended that the applicant contact NECAS prior to submitting the request to discuss their specific needs.

When required, an appropriate translating service will be contracted to provide translations.

4.6 Outsourcing of equipment and materials

Where NECAS is unable to purchase commercially available equipment and materials, NECAS may outsource to appropriate suppliers.

Section 5

5.1 Priority of Access to non-electronic communication aids

Eligible requests may be prioritised according to the person’s needs. Consideration will be given to communication aids that will:

- increase social opportunities and community participation
- meet immediate and changing needs
- enhance opportunities for communication

In certain circumstances, requests may be prioritised according to a Priority of Access Framework. This framework is outlined in the Table 3 and refers to people who are eligible to receive services from NECAS.

| Requirements | Rating |
|---|--------|
| Intensive Care or Hospital Admission | HIGH |
| Degenerative Condition such as Huntington’s Disease, Multiple Sclerosis or Motor Neurone Disease | HIGH |
| The person has no other communication aid | HIGH |
| The person is at risk of harming themselves and others | HIGH |
| Transition to a new environment with unfamiliar communication partners | MEDIUM |
| Social isolation and lack of participation in the community | MEDIUM |
| The request is for a person aged 65+ | LOW |
| The request is for a backup communication aid | LOW |
| The request is for a replacement communication aid | LOW |
| The person has no one in their environment to support the implementation of their communication aid | LOW |

Table 3: Priority of Access Framework

The process to identify and process a request, which is deemed a priority, is as follows:

- A request is identified as a priority on the Service Request Form;
- The Speech Pathologist reviews the request and applies the Priority of Access Framework;
- A follow up call to the person requesting a service is made to discuss individual circumstances and confirm the need for priority access and timelines;
- The service request is given priority ahead of other requests which are deemed to be of a lower priority as identified by the Priority of Access Framework;
- A follow up call is made to the person requesting the service after the final draft has been received to ensure the adequacy of the communication aid provided.

5.2 What if there is a complaint?

If the applicant has a complaint about any aspect of NECAS, he/she should raise the matter with the NECAS coordinator in the first instance, and attempt to resolve the issue.

If a matter cannot be resolved the applicant may wish to pursue the issue, following the process as outlined in Scope's Complaints Procedure. Written information regarding Scope's Complaints Procedure, which complies with the Disability Act, is made available to applicants on request.

If the issue remains unresolved between NECAS and the applicant, it should be directed to the DHS Program and Service Adviser.

5.3 Client records and privacy principles

Scope's Communication Resource Centre needs personal information to provide services that meet the individual's needs. Without personal information this would not be possible. The only staff with access to this personal information will be those who need it to do their jobs. Personal/health information will be kept securely and confidentially. Paper-based and electronic information will be stored in lockable cabinets or containers.

For further information please refer to:
Office of the Health Services Commissioner
Web site: www.health.vic.gov.au/hsc
Phone: (03) 8601 5200

Office of the Australian Information Commissioner
Web site: www.oaic.gov.au
Phone Toll Free: 1300 363 992

5.4 Ownership of Equipment

Ownership of the communication aid is by the applicant with complex communication needs.

Section 6

6.1 Acknowledgments

The Communication Resource Centre acknowledges the Victorian Aids and Equipment Program Electronic Communication Devices Scheme (VAEP:ECD Scheme) Guidelines as a source for these guidelines.

6.2 References and further information

References

Balandin, S., 2002. Message from the President, ISAAC Bulletin 67, 2.

Further Information

- [Non-electronic Communication Aid Scheme](#)
Ph: + 61 3 9843 2000
www.scopevic.org.au
- [Victorian Aids and Equipment Program: Electronic Communication Devices Scheme \(A&EP:ECD\)](#)
Ph: +61 3 9362 6154
www.yooralla.com.au
- Department of Human Services Privacy Information
www.dhs.vic.gov.au/privacy