

Property maintenance

Introduction

This section describes the requirements for property maintenance and minor modification services funded by the HACC program.

Readers should also refer to the sections:

- Part 3: 'The Victorian approach to care: the active service model'
- Part 2: 'Service coordination, assessment and care planning'

Property maintenance services provide advice and assistance with home and garden maintenance to help people maintain a safe, habitable and healthy home environment. The services provide repairs and modifications to assist people managing disabling conditions to move safely about the house.

Services work in partnership with the person, their carer and other service providers to implement approaches which improve, restore or maintain the person's capacity to remain living independently at home.

Scope

The local context for property maintenance varies across metropolitan and rural areas, influencing the services provided.

Tasks within the scope of a HACC funded service include:

- the installation of small mobility aids, grab rails, ramps, shower rails, special taps, raised vegetable gardens or other items related to safety, independence and home-based activities
- clearing long grass or flammable materials in high fire-danger areas
- one-off garden clearing or modification to enable the person to maintain a low maintenance garden. Gardening as a physical activity has been shown to have multiple benefits, including bending, stretching, weight bearing and as a meaningful and enjoyable activity
- minor household maintenance or repairs that do not require the skills of a qualified tradesperson such as a licensed electrician or plumber. Examples include changing light bulbs where a ladder is required, replacing tap washers, minor furniture changes or installation, or painting which is necessary for safety reasons
- unblocking drains
- removal of rubbish where removal is necessary to maintain a safe home environment and there are no other practical options
- advice about other programs and services.

A HACC funded property maintenance service does not provide ongoing maintenance of lawns unless this is essential for a safe home environment, and other alternatives are not available.

Major home modifications are generally beyond the scope of a HACC funded service. At most, a HACC funded service may be able to offer assistance with one-off minor works such as conversion to a low maintenance garden or installation of shower rails.

Property maintenance in private rental or public housing should not undertake tasks which would normally be the responsibility of the landlord.

Assessment

Property maintenance services will assess the home environment and provide information and advice on works that can be undertaken.

Within this scope, property maintenance services:

- work with the person to build their capacity and confidence to manage their home environment
- negotiate with the person, other family members and paid or volunteer workers to decide which activities will be undertaken and by whom
- provide assistance for essential tasks which the person has identified as a priority, but is unable, or can only partially do
- encourage people to do as much as possible for themselves, consistent with safety and maintaining a secure home environment.

Depending on the assessment, property maintenance may be provided on a routine, episodic or cyclical basis, and may increase, decrease or cease according to the person's needs.

The types of assistance provided will vary between locations, depending on the needs and abilities of the person and their carer and the priorities of service providers, as determined in response to local conditions and other locally available services.

Assessment for property maintenance and minor modifications focuses on the person's needs in relation to their home environment, in consultation with the carer.

The assessment evaluates the extent of repairs, minor modifications and cyclical or one-off tasks that may be necessary for the person's safety, security and wellbeing. Safety aspects of the assessment include:

- mobility and movement in and around the house and garden, such as ramps and rails
- tripping, slipping or falls hazards such as cracked or slippery paths, poor access points or poor lighting
- other items that may impact on safety in and around the home environment such as long grass, unsafe wiring or access routes.

Personal goals and values may be relevant in relation to property maintenance. For example, some people may be 'garden proud' or enjoy spending time in the garden and may thus place a high priority on garden maintenance, while other people may have other priorities.

Care planning

Following the assessment, and in collaboration with the person and their carer, a care plan is developed. This might occur as part of the Living at home assessment.

The plan sets out the person's goals for enhancing their home independence and safety and describes the agreed strategies for achieving them. The care plan details:

- assistance to be provided by the HACC service, family members or tradespeople
- timeframes for works to be completed
- coordination and collaboration with other service providers as required.

Where home modifications are required an occupational therapist will be involved in assessing requests. The occupational therapist will visit the home and specify requirements for the modification, such as the placement, dimensions and height of rails and other modifications, and ensure they meet appropriate standards. For more information refer to Part 3: 'Allied health'.

Offering advice and alternatives

If the assessed work requirements are beyond the scope of the HACC property maintenance service, the HACC funded agency may elect to provide the person with information about alternatives and assistance to pursue them, such as information about the statewide equipment service or home renovation service, or a list of accredited local businesses.

The agency may develop and maintain a list of local tradespeople to quote for small jobs. Assistance may be provided with obtaining quotes, negotiating with tradespeople, arranging for a service club or local community group to provide volunteers (such as for clean-ups or lawn maintenance) or fund raising.

Furniture repair may be the kind of job that can be done by a local men's shed program.

Contracting out and client co-payment

A HACC funded property maintenance service may choose either to undertake work or contract jobs to a local home repair service or tradesperson.

People are expected to pay for any materials used in property maintenance and minor home modifications. In these cases the HACC Fees Policy and the person's capacity to pay should be taken into consideration.

Alternative government programs

The Victorian Statewide Equipment Program (SWEP) provides people with a permanent or long-term disability with subsidised aids and equipment to enhance independence in their home, facilitate community participation and support families and carers in their role. Home modifications funded through SWEP include disability specific equipment to enable access such as rails, handheld showers, safety flooring, ramps and step modifications.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) manages the Victorian Home Renovation service, which works to help people of any age with disabilities to remain living independently in their own home environment. The service assesses homes to see where modifications can be made to make living at home easier and safer.

Staffing statement

HACC funded property maintenance services should be provided in a coordinated way with other HACC services.

HACC property maintenance funds can be used to hire tradespeople to undertake work at the discretion of the service provider. It is the responsibility of each service provider to determine how best to deliver the service. Services can be delivered in a number of ways including direct provision, subcontracting, or the provision of advice and referral.

HACC property maintenance is provided by people with appropriate qualifications and expertise.

HACC funded agencies must adhere to legislative or regulative requirements where the work is undertaken by licensed or registered tradespeople.

Reporting requirements

Organisations funded for property maintenance are required to participate in the quarterly collection of the HACC minimum data set (MDS).

For details see, Part 1: 'Reporting and data collection'.

The HACC MDS is used to record details of individual clients receiving hours of property maintenance.

Links

Statewide Equipment Program (SWEP)

<http://swep.bhs.org.au/>

Home renovation service

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/housing-and-accommodation/home-owner-support/home-modification>

Home renovation loan

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/housing-and-accommodation/home-owner-support/home-modification/home-renovation-loan>

Men's Sheds

<http://www.mensheds.com.au/index.php?id=28>
