**NSW Spectacles Program: Frequently Asked Questions**

**Why do providers in non-metropolitan areas of NSW receive a higher reimbursement amount than their metropolitan counterparts?**

For providers delivering services to patients in non-metropolitan regions of NSW, an additional loading of $10 is applied to some products to cover additional costs associated with delivery. A listing of postcodes considered in metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas is available from Vision Australia on request. The delineation is based on Australian Bureau of Statistics classifications (see the next question).

For the NSW Spectacles Program it is the patient’s postcode that determines whether the $10 non-metropolitan loading is applied to the claim reimbursement value (not the provider’s postcode).

**How do I know if an area in NSW is designated as metropolitan or non-metropolitan?**

The Australian Bureau of Statistics remoteness index (ARIA – Accessibility/ Remoteness Index of Austraila) is used. ARIA uses a specific definition of remoteness based upon the distance people must travel along a road network to get to areas where they can access goods, services and opportunities for social interaction. A metropolitan area is any postcode found in the “Major City” category. A non-metropolitan area is any postcode found in the Inner Regional, Outer Regional, Remote or Very Remote category.

**Do applicants still need to bring in Centrelink Income statements?**

Yes they do so that you can sight key information from the statement to enter into the online portal when applying for spectacles and vision aids through the Program. This provides immediate notification of eligibility.

It is important you advise your patients to make sure they have a Centrelink Income statement. When they request this from Centrelink they should ask for a Centrelink Income and Assets statement to be sure they obtain the right document to access the Program.

**Do I need to keep Centrelink statements on file for auditing purposes?**

No. Only a small proportion of claims will be audited by Vision Australia to ensure you are submitting claims correctly and patients are eligible. While you are required to sight Centrelink or payslip/bank statement evidence of an applicant’s income and assets, they are only required to submit the financial documentation on request by the online portal.

At the commencement of a claim, the portal may request you to provide copies of the eligibility documentation as part of routine auditing processes. At such time you may choose to scan in to the portal or fax in copies of the documentation to Vision Australia. You do not need to keep documentation on file at your practice.

**What patient information do I need to enter into the online portal?**

* Standard personal details include name, address, phone, email, date of birth, Medicare number, if they are partnered or have dependent children.
* Basic income and asset information for eligibility check including if on full Centrelink benefits, if receive other income, if asset value under the $500/$1,000 threshold. A total of three Yes/No questions only.

**What do I do when patients wish to appeal their claim because they believe they should be eligible?**

The online portal will enable you to print out an information sheet listing the reasons the applicant was found not to be eligible. You can hand this to your patient and advise him/her to contact Vision Australia for further information. The information sheet can be printed in the following languages: English, Chinese, Vietnamese, Arabic, Greek, Hindi.

**What are the products that can be funded and the amounts I will be reimbursed for each product type?**

A Product Price Schedule is available from Vision Australia on request to optometrists and optical dispensers interested in participating in the Program.

**Is there a hard copy of the application form available for when I do home visits or conduct outreach clinics where there is no internet connectivity?**

Yes there is and this is available on request from Vision Australia should you require this. Note that the information written in these forms will then need to be entered into the portal to access the program.

**Can I submit hard copy applications to be reimbursed for a claim?**

No. Online applications submitted via the online portal will be processed for reimbursement.

**What spectacles and optical appliances are covered by the Program?**

* Single vision stock and grind spectacles.
* Bifocals.
* Two pairs of near and distance spectacles when bifocals are not suitable.
* Contact lenses for particular clinical needs.
* Low vision aids for particular clinical needs.

Special claims can be put forward for approval for items valued higher than the reimbursement rate when the patient presents with a valid clinical need.

**What spectacles and optical appliances are NOT covered by the Program?**

* Multifocals
* Transition lenses
* Multicoat

**How were the reimbursement rates determined?**

The reimbursement rates were set to maximise the number of people of NSW from vulnerable and disadvantaged backgrounds that access government funded spectacles and vision aids. The price rates were determined through market analysis and testing undertaken in 2014. Consultation was undertaken by the Department of Family and Community Services and involved a number of optometrists and optical dispensers.

**Is there a set range of frames for patients of the Program?**

No. You as a provider can select the range of frames patients can choose from when having spectacles funded by the Program.

**Can patients make a co-contribution towards their spectacles?**

Yes. Patients are able to make a co-contribution to the cost of spectacles. Co-contribution frequency and value will be entered into the online payment by providers.

**How often and in what way does Vision Australia pay its providers the reimbursement rate for each claim submitted?**Vision Australia’s payment terms are 30 days from the date the spectacles were supplied to the patient. However, we aim to reimburse providers sooner wherever possible.

Payment is made by EFT (Electronic Funds Transfer) to your nominated bank account. A remittance is emailed to your nominated email address for billing.

**What training and support is available to use the online portal?**

The portal is easy to use. Vision Australia can provide training face to face, over the phone or using remote software that allows you to view the screen one of our trainers.

Troubleshooting support is available 9 to 5 Monday to Friday over the phone or via email.