

# Guide to Reasonable and Necessary (R & N) decisions

## Recliners and lift chairs

### Case example

Brenda's disability means she needs help to safely stand up from a seated position. She works with her therapist to explore support options that help make this task easier. Based on her therapist's recommendation, she asks us to fund an electric lift chair.

### Would we fund this?

Yes, we would typically fund buying or hiring a lift chair or specialised recliner chair if Brenda can't stand independently.

They are generally effective, beneficial and have been shown to help people sit and stand independently. This means they are likely to meet our [NDIS funding criteria](#). Brenda will need to give written evidence from her registered therapist. This evidence needs to show the equipment is effective and beneficial for her disability support needs.

### Why would we fund this?

NDIS laws determine what we can and can't fund. Things we can fund are called NDIS supports. You can use the funding in your plan to buy NDIS supports if they are related to your disability and are in-line with your plan.<sup>1</sup>

Standard recliner chairs are common household furniture. A lot of people buy them and they're found in many Australian homes. Household furniture that most people have in their homes is unlikely to be an NDIS support.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, we're unlikely to fund it.

If, however, Brenda needs specific furniture because of her disability support needs we can consider if it would be an NDIS support for her.

To work out whether an electric lift chair is an NDIS support for Brenda, we look at the information she gives us against the [NDIS funding criteria](#). She would have to show written evidence that she needs the furniture because of her disability support needs. This could be a report, letter or email from a registered therapist.

It would need to show us the lift chair:

- is needed as a result of Brenda's disability support needs
- can be properly installed and safely operated by Brenda

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<sup>1</sup> NDIS Act s 34(1)(f).

<sup>2</sup> NDIS Act s 10.

- will be effective and beneficial in increasing her independence when moving between sitting and standing.

It also needs to show the lift chair is value for money.<sup>3</sup> This may include giving us evidence from a therapist or clinician that shows either:

- a comparable support, such as a more standard chair, would not be adequate in meeting Brenda's disability support needs
- the lift chair would likely reduce the long-term cost of other supports, for example home care support hours.

To work out whether the lift chair is value for money we'll also look at other things such as ongoing maintenance. For example, it may be more cost effective to rent the lift chair if Brenda only needs the chair for a few months. The planner will decide how much funding Brenda will need for maintenance. This is based on the expected cost and how often the lift chair is likely to need maintenance.

In most cases, the funding for a lift chair also includes the cost of delivery and installation. The planner will think about these costs when assessing whether the lift chair is value for money.

### **What else do we think about?**

We would not fund things that don't relate to Brenda's disability support needs. She may, however, choose to pay from her own money if she would like to have:

- a particular brand, model or design of an item with the same specifications
- add-on special features not related to her disability support needs, such as leather arm supports.

If the lift chair Brenda asks for has better performance and function than the base model, we will work out whether the higher-priced item still meets [NDIS funding criteria](#). We'll think about whether she needs the higher functionality as a result of her disability and whether it is value for money.

Brenda then gets written advice from her therapist to help her buy the right lift chair.

### **Case example**

Dimitri is 32 years old and lives alone. He has muscular dystrophy and ongoing deterioration in his muscle strength. He's falling more often when he tries to stand up out of the chairs in his home. Dimitri's therapist recommends he buy a sit-to-stand recliner chair to help him transition (sit to stand) safely.

Dimitri asks us to fund his sit-to-stand recliner chair. He gives us his therapist's written evidence for the recommended specialised electric recliner chair.

To work out whether the sit-to-stand recliner chair is an NDIS support for Dimitri, his planner looks at this information against the [NDIS funding criteria](#).

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<sup>3</sup> NDIS Act s 34(1)(c).

The planner thinks about a range of things:

- Is the sit-to-stand recliner chair a disability-related support or a day-to-day living cost? We would not fund something that is not related to Dimitri's disability support needs. To work this out the planner considers whether Dimitri needs the chair because of his disability support needs. That is, whether his muscular dystrophy is the reason he can't transfer safely out of his lounge chair. Or does he need the chair for a non-disability-related reason? For example, he can't transfer safely because his current chair is old or broken.
- What are the benefits of the requested specialised sit-to-stand recliner chair? Will it help Dimitri to prevent or reduce falls?
- How does the cost of the sit-to-stand chair compare with other specialist recliner chairs available? The planner would look at the typical chair type that other participants have successfully used as a benchmark. This would show if there are more cost-effective options with equivalent performance and function.
- What other services or comparable supports are available that may have wider or longer-term benefits? This might include Dimitri's therapist developing a strengthening program to increase his ability to stand independently.

In Dimitri's case the planner decides:

- there is evidence to show Dimitri's falls are directly related to his disability support needs
- the therapist report gives enough evidence to show the sit-to-stand chair is likely to be effective and beneficial for Dimitri and has regard to current good practice
- the sit-to-stand chair is value for money. Its cost is comparable with what participants have paid for similar sit-to-stand chairs. The price doesn't include extra accessories not related to Dimitri's disability support needs.
- options such as general furniture items or a strengthening program are unlikely to adequately meet Dimitri's disability support needs and improve his safety.

The planner assesses funding for the specialised sit-to-stand recliner chair as reasonable and necessary and this is approved in Dimitri's plan.

Dimitri then gets written advice from his therapist to help him choose the right sit-to-stand recliner chair. Dimitri contacts different providers to get the best price for his chair and buys it with the funding in his plan. His therapist and the supplier help set it up and show him how to safely use it.

For more information, go to:

- [Our Guideline – Reasonable and necessary supports](#)
- [Our Guideline – Assistive Technology](#).