



Newsletter January 2026

# AT YOUR SERVICE<sup>TM</sup>

## HOME CARE

HOME CARE DONE RIGHT



## THE BENEFITS OF BIRDSONG!



## WHAT'S INSIDE

- MEDICAL GRADE FOOTWEAR & SHEEPSKINS
- CAN MY FUNDING PAY FOR BED & MATTRESSES?
- BETTER ACCESS TO PSYCHOLOGY SERVICES
- FREE EVENTS FOR CARERS

# The surprising benefits of birdsong

With more than half the world's population (56%) living in urban areas, it's become more and more difficult to access the same daily contact with nature that many of us grew up with.

And while research has shown that access to outdoor green spaces can lower blood pressure and stress levels, it's not always possible to get out into nature.

This is where the surprising benefits of birdsong comes in...

Just listening to the sound of nature can offer a host of benefits too!

In fact, a recent meta-analysis showed that water sounds alone can increase feelings of joy and positivity, and that bird sounds had the largest effect on lowering stress levels.

## **So why do we find birdsong so relaxing and reassuring?**

According to sound consultant, Julian Treasure, "Over thousands of years, we've learned that when the birds are singing, things are safe. It's when they stop that you need to be worried."

And it turns out that not only is birdsong good for our mental health, but it may also help with our cognition.

Feeling stuck with that crossword? There may be a birdsong for that! Numerous studies have also shown that listening to birdsong increases focus and restores attention.

And luckily for us there's now an online radio station that's playing the joyful sounds of birdsong 24/7:

<https://soundcloud.com/letnaturesing/birdsong-radio>



# What is medical grade footwear?

Most of us spend hours on our feet each day, so having appropriate footwear is very important for our safety and comfort. The Department of Health, Disability & Ageing may approve the purchase of Medical Grade Footwear in some circumstances to improve mobility and dexterity, so it helps to understand that there are differences between everyday orthopaedic comfort shoes and Medical Grade Footwear.

**Medical Grade Footwear** describes footwear recommended and prescribed by a qualified professional when suitable shoes cannot fit or be modified because of a deformity or abnormality of either (or both) the foot or the ankle.

Medical Grade Footwear includes:

- Ready-made extra depth and/or width footwear
- Custom-made footwear manufactured by a contracted supplier to fit a person's individual foot and/or ankle structure

Medical Grade Footwear does not include everyday footwear that can be purchased from a retail shop (i.e. sneakers or casual shoes); inappropriate styles of shoes (i.e. slippers, slip-on, open-toed, high-heeled or orthotic shoes); and shoes designed to accommodate orthoses.

A podiatrist or relevant medical specialist (e.g. orthopaedic surgeon or rehabilitation specialist) may prescribe Medical Grade Footwear to reduce the risk of trips or falls due to abnormal gait. This may be caused as a result of injury, disease, illness, diabetes, pain, stroke or surgery.

If you're living with any of these risk factors, we will work with you to ensure relevant referrals, assessments and ongoing supports are included in your care plan to give you the best possible outcomes for your safety and comfort. Please contact us for a chat about Medical Grade Footwear and we will assist you to see if you're eligible to use Assistive Technology funds in this way.



# Could you benefit from medical-grade sheepskin products?

If you've been experiencing pain or discomfort from long periods of sitting or lying down, medical-grade sheepskin products may be a solution. By distributing weight more evenly, they can help reduce pressure on certain areas of the body that are associated with a lack of movement or reduced mobility. These wonderful products also draw moisture away from the skin and can help protect and maintain delicate skin integrity.

## The range of sheepskin products includes:

- Bed overlays
- Chair covers
- Wheelchair covers
- Boots and slippers
- Seat cushion covers
- Heel and elbow protectors



Sheepskin products are recognised as a prescribed product in the Assistive Technology (AT) Service List to manage the skin integrity of eligible participants. If you're assessed by a qualified allied health professional and they recommend you use sheepskin products, we will update your care plan and help you get the care you need.



Visit the Independent Living Specialist website below for more information:  
[https://ilsau.com.au/?s=sheepskin&post\\_type=product](https://ilsau.com.au/?s=sheepskin&post_type=product)

# Essential Medical Equipment Payment (EMEP) Scheme

Did you know that there are special programs to help with energy costs to run essential medical equipment, or heating or cooling used for medical needs in your home? The rising cost of living has an impact on all households, but for people who also have to run expensive medical equipment, it's good to know there is some financial relief available.

## Who can use the Essential Medical Equipment Payment Scheme?

You, or the person you provide care for, must meet **all** of the following criteria:

- You need heating, cooling or certain eligible equipment for medical needs
- You have a Commonwealth Concession Card
- You pay for the energy running costs
- You are in Australia when you claim

The Payment Scheme will pay you \$196 per year for:

1. Heating or cooling used for medical needs
2. Each piece of eligible essential medical equipment

For example, if you have 2 pieces of equipment and need heating for your condition, you'll get 3 payments each year. One payment for each piece of equipment, and one payment for the heating.

Only people using the following types of equipment are eligible to apply:

| Types of Equipment                        |                                                         |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Home dialysis machine                     | Nebuliser, used daily                                   |
| Home ventilator                           | Positive airways pressure device e.g. CPAP              |
| Home respirator                           | Phototherapy equipment                                  |
| Home parenteral or enteral feeding device | Air bed vibrator e.g. alternating air pressure mattress |
| Oxygen concentrator                       | Electric wheelchair                                     |
| Heart pump                                | Insulin pump                                            |
| Suction pump                              |                                                         |

### **Are there exclusions?**

You can't get this payment for any other equipment. Mobility or electric scooters are not deemed to be essential medical equipment for EMEP, and equipment with non-rechargeable batteries are not eligible.

### **What types of medical conditions or medical needs are eligible for the Heating or Cooling Payment?**

You can get the Essential Medical Equipment Payment (EMEP) of \$196.00 per year for heating or cooling used for medical needs if you experience any of these conditions:

- A stroke
- A brain injury
- A neurodegenerative disorder
- Muscular dystrophies
- A spinal cord injury at or above the T7 level
- Rare sweating disorders
- Chronic erythrodermas (a serious skin disease)

If you believe you may be eligible, you will need to supply some supporting evidence for your application, including special documentation from your medical practitioner and proof of your current payments for electricity or gas.

Once your application is approved, you will receive the payment every year and you don't have to reapply unless your circumstances change or you change your address.

If you have any of the conditions or existing equipment detailed above, we will work with you to ensure you are able to get the financial assistance you need.

More information is available from Services Australia by calling 132 300, or visit their website:

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/essential-medical-equipment-payment>



# Improving Aged Care for First Nations Elders

The Department of Health, Disability & Ageing announced they are reforming the aged care system to ensure First Nations people receive quality, culturally appropriate aged care services, are supported to access advice to make informed decisions about their care and, are treated with cultural sensitivity, dignity and respect.

The reforms include funding for a range of measures that will improve the overall aged care sector's ability to tailor support to the unique requirements of Australia's First Nations communities.

The funding will include:

- More First Nations workers to help people access care and work in aged care services
- New aged care facilities and upgrades to existing facilities
- Support for health and disability services – including Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations – to expand into aged care
- Better access to translation and interpreting services, and translated information
- Support and scholarships for First Nations nursing, allied health and personal care students.

There are a range of other programs being implemented, some of which have been in operation for some time already, but all aim to support the aged care and home care sector to meet the diverse needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia.

Supporting elders to remain close to their preferred communities and age-in-place is a key objective, as is building a skilled workforce to help First Nations elders, their families and carers, to access aged care services to meet their physical and cultural needs.



# Can my funding pay for: bed and mattress purchases

Getting a good night's sleep in a comfortable bed is usually a high priority for most of us, so it's no surprise that we are asked from time to time, whether Support at Home funds can be used to pay for a new bed, bed frame, and/or a new mattress.

For such a simple question, the answer is not always so easy to give, so we've included some information from the Department of Health, Disability & Ageing to help clarify this topic. Throughout our lives, we are responsible for purchasing or replacing beds and mattresses as our circumstances change or as they wear out after prolonged use.

It is generally expected that this remains a personal responsibility regardless of our age, and is the basis upon which the Department has formed its view about who should pay for bed and mattress purchases for older people receiving Support at Home funding. Standard beds and mattresses are usually classified as general income purchases and are generally **excluded** from the program.

There are exceptions where a person's age-related needs or disabling condition require more specialised equipment, such as a pressure-relieving mattress or an electrical adjustable bed and/or hospital bed.

As with all Support at Home spending, the purchase must align with a participant's assessed care needs, and they will also need access to sufficient HCP unspent funds or be approved for funding under the AT-HM Scheme.

We will help to arrange any necessary referrals and assessments to help determine the most suitable recommendations for your needs.

Additional equipment and products such as mechanical devices for lifting (in/out of bed), bed rails, slide sheets, sheepskins, tri-pillows, and hospital-grade linen may also be purchased with the necessary professional recommendation.



# 'Better Access' to Psychology Services

A report published by the University of Melbourne showed that people over 65 years are among the section of Australian society that is **least likely** to access psychological services through the Government-subsidised mental health scheme.

It's well known that living with mental ill-health greatly impacts people's lives and can be overwhelming and isolating, so early identification and treatment are important steps toward improving health outcomes.

[The Better Access initiative](#) gives Medicare rebates to eligible people, so they can access the mental health services they need. Eligible people can receive up to 10 individual and up to 10 group allied mental health services each year. Better Access helps cover the cost of this support, giving you easier access and more choice, including video consultations for people in rural and remote areas.

For people experiencing severe mental ill health, the Aged Persons Mental Health Service is available, but for most older people, some early psychological treatments and interventions can have very beneficial outcomes and may help to prevent more severe mental illness.

If you are experiencing persistent worries, mood changes, anxiety or any concerns about your mental health, we strongly encourage you to make some time to discuss your eligibility for the Better Access program with your GP.

If you require additional age-related mental health support beyond the Better Access program, this may be funded with your ongoing quarterly budget as Clinical support. There are no out-of-pocket participant contributions required when receiving Clinical support.

Before your funds can be allocated, we will work with you to ensure your assessment and funding approvals are up-to-date to reflect your situation, so your quarterly budget can best support your health and wellbeing.



**The Better  
Access Initiative**

# Supported Decision-Making

According to Dementia Australia, making our own decisions about things that affect us is a basic human right and is important for our self-esteem and self-worth. Regardless of the complexity of the decision to be made, health & aged care professionals, as well as family carers & representatives, have an obligation to include and assist participants to participate in the decision-making process and to maximise their involvement in decisions relating to their lifestyle, care and health.

Having a formal decision-maker appointed on a person's behalf can take away their sense of autonomy and independence, as well as leave them without a voice or a say over even some of the more straightforward decisions in their life. Avoiding the appointment of a formal decision-maker may be possible for a person living with dementia, cognitive impairment or other types of disability. Instead, ensuring the person has guided support to make decisions can mean they can continue to make choices and maintain control wherever possible.

Understanding and navigating the aged care system can be complex, so if you are responsible for helping someone to make decisions about accessing aged care services, interacting with Government bodies, choosing home care or residential care supports, making a complaint, understanding the role of substitute decision-makers, and other key matters, it's good to know there are resources available to guide you.

Two excellent resources to support and guide participants and those involved in supported decision-making are available at these links:

<https://www.dementia.org.au/living-dementia/what-next-after-your-diagnosis/planning-ahead/deciding-who-can-speak-you>

<https://qai.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Supported-Decision-Making-Guide-ADA-and-QAI.pdf>

We are committed to supporting all our participants to have their voices and preferences heard and respected at all times, and will ensure we discuss and capture this important information in our participant documentation and assessments.



**Supported  
Decision-Making  
Resources**

# Free online events for carers!



## **January 27th - Evening guided meditation series for busy carers**

Throughout this gentle series, carers will be guided through a nurturing meditation designed to quieten the mind and create peace, presence and deep stillness. [Learn more >](#)

## **January 29th - The importance of planning ahead for the future**

Planning for the future can be challenging for carers, many of whom avoid thinking about future needs for themselves and the person they care for, until they are facing a crisis. This session provides an overview of the legal, medical and financial considerations in planning for the future, as well as a free handbook with helpful tools and resources. [Learn more >](#)

## **February 19th - Practical techniques for managing stress and restoring balance**

If you've been feeling overwhelmed and could benefit from some well deserved 'me time', this interactive workshop will provide you with practical relaxation techniques to help you manage stress and restore balance. [Learn more >](#)

## **February 25th - Activities to engage someone living with dementia**

This practical session assists carers looking after someone at home to plan meaningful and engaging activities. It promotes independence and wellbeing by focusing on what the person with dementia can still do. [Learn more >](#)

## **February 27th - National Gallery Australia - Art and dementia online**

This is a social and creative program for people living with dementia and their carers from across the country, that engages participants with the National Gallery's collection through discussion and art making. [Learn more >](#)

**\*\*Need help getting online? The Good Things Foundation can help:**

<https://goodthingsaustralia.org/learn/>

# Word Search: iconic original Australian brands

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| O | E | H | E | B | I | L | L | A | B | O | N | G | F |
| E | L | R | F | A | K | U | B | R | A | S | P | P | H |
| J | S | B | S | P | E | E | D | O | S | S | P | J | R |
| R | K | E | U | Q | A | N | T | A | S | I | T | D | B |
| U | E | L | A | N | W | M | N | V | T | R | R | U | M |
| T | G | V | M | R | N | I | M | A | O | T | V | R | Y |
| Q | Q | G | V | Q | N | I | A | W | A | H | E | S | W |
| B | F | W | Y | B | P | O | N | G | A | N | G | E | B |
| Z | J | N | H | Z | Z | U | T | G | V | D | E | D | O |
| O | E | L | F | Q | A | A | T | T | S | T | M | A | N |
| D | L | Q | L | Y | A | K | R | E | S | Q | I | Q | D |
| K | L | L | T | R | D | F | W | T | C | I | T | A | S |
| B | Y | C | T | L | I | C | M | H | I | A | E | V | M |
| G | H | H | O | L | D | E | N | C | U | Z | K | T | O |

Find the 12 hidden words by searching for only the words in bold

•Qantas •Bunnings •Ugg Boots •Vegemite •Billabong •Aeroplane Jelly  
•Speedo •Arnotts •Akubra •Bonds •Holden •Bundaberg Rum

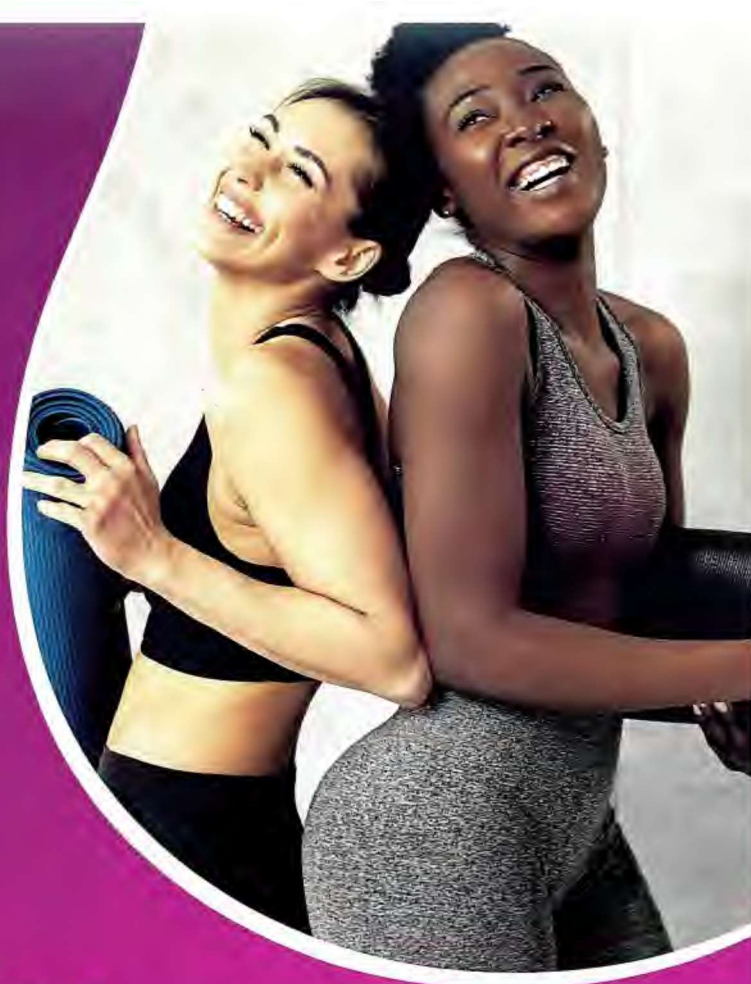


**NEW**



**POISE®**

*LiveFree™*



## WEAK BLADDER? TRY OUR NEW ULTRATHIN PADS

**5X** Drier than Leading Period Pads

**12** Up to 12 hour odour protection

 Unique **INSTA ABSORB™** Zone

 **Anti-Leak** Guards

 Available in **Wings** and **No Wings**

**POISE® LiveFree™**  
Regular Pad 14 no wings  
Absorbency: **110ml\***  
Length: **240mm**

**POISE® LiveFree™**  
Regular Pad 14 with wings  
Absorbency: **110ml\***  
Length: **240mm**

**POISE® LiveFree™**  
Super Pad 12 no wings  
Absorbency: **150ml\***  
Length: **280mm**

**POISE® LiveFree™**  
Super Pad 12 with wings  
Absorbency: **150ml\***  
Length: **280mm**



SCAN HERE  
FOR YOUR  
FREE SAMPLE



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# AGENDA

## JANUARY | 26

| MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT | SUN |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
|     |     |     | 1   | 2   | 3   | 4   |
| 5   | 6   | 7   | 8   | 9   | 10  | 11  |
| 12  | 13  | 14  | 15  | 16  | 17  | 18  |
| 19  | 20  | 21  | 22  | 23  | 24  | 25  |
| 26  | 27  | 28  | 29  | 30  | 31  |     |

Check out the events this month:

26

PUBLIC HOLIDAY: Australia Day



[www.ayshomecare.org](http://www.ayshomecare.org)



[@atyourservicehc](https://www.instagram.com/atyourservicehc)



39 Mogul Court, Deer  
Park, VIC, 3023



# *Valentine's day Lunch*

10 FEB | AT 11AM | SAVE THE DATE



RVSP to Xandria or Care Partner on  
1300 952 860



Happy  
New Year

# Looking for a friendly voice?

## Join Golden Pen pals

**Are you a senior looking to make new connections and brighten your day with a friendly conversation?** Our Phone Penpal Program is here to help you stay connected with others and share stories, laughter, and support – all through the comfort of a phone call.

Whether you're looking for a new friend to chat with or want to share experiences with someone who understands, becoming a phone penpal can be a wonderful way to enrich your life.

### How It Works:

Simply sign up, and we'll match you with a friendly phone penpal. Connect once a week (or as often as you'd like) for fun, meaningful conversations.

Share stories, talk about hobbies, or simply chat about your day.



### Why Join?

Combat loneliness and build new friendship  
Enjoy regular conversations that fit your schedule.

Engage in a fun, safe, and supportive community of fellow seniors.

Interested?

Call At Your Service Home Care office at 1300 952 860 or email [ays@cumberlandmanor.com.au](mailto:ays@cumberlandmanor.com.au) to sign up and learn more about how you can become a phone penpal today!



# 5-IN-1 LEAK & ODOUR PROTECTION

NEW



## DESCRIPTION

DEPEND® Shields

DEPEND® Guards Level 2

DEPEND® Guards Level 3

## ABSORBENCY

90ml

535ml

650ml

SCAN HERE  
FOR YOUR  
FREE SAMPLE





# NOW WITH UP TO 12-HOUR LEAK & ODOUR PROTECTION



|               | DESCRIPTION                               | SIZE    | WAIST SIZE | ABSORBENCY |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------|---------|------------|------------|
| <b>Womens</b> | DEPEND® REAL FIT® Underwear               | Medium  | 71-102cm   | 920ml      |
|               | DEPEND® REAL FIT® Underwear               | Large   | 97-162cm   | 920ml      |
|               | DEPEND® REAL FIT® Underwear               | X-Large | 122-162cm  | 920ml      |
|               | DEPEND® REAL FIT® Underwear Super         | Medium  | 71-102cm   | 1320ml     |
|               | DEPEND® REAL FIT® Underwear Super         | Large   | 97-162cm   | 1320ml     |
|               | DEPEND® REAL FIT® Underwear Super         | X-Large | 122-162cm  | 1320ml     |
|               | DEPEND® REAL FIT® Night Defence Underwear | Large   | 97-162cm   | 1350ml     |
| <b>Mens</b>   | DEPEND® REAL FIT® Underwear               | Medium  | 71-102cm   | 1320ml     |
|               | DEPEND® REAL FIT® Underwear               | Large   | 97-162cm   | 1320ml     |
|               | DEPEND® REAL FIT® Night Defence Underwear | Large   | 97-162cm   | 1350ml     |

**NEW LOOK, EVEN BETTER PROTECTION**

\*Up to 12 hours.

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HAPPY WITH  
OUR SERVICES?

We appreciate your feedback!

[CLICK HERE TO LEAVE A GOOGLE REVIEW](#)

Leave us a Google Review and receive a FREE Gift Bag as  
a thank-you from our team! 🎁

Your support helps us grow—and we love showing our  
appreciation.

★ Just show your review to a staff member to claim  
your gift!

