# White Cane Issuing and Sales Policy and Procedure

## Policy Summary

* Clients with available funding packages are required to use their package to purchase a cane of their choice
* Vision Australia will continue to offer a complimentary Bevria cane on an annual basis to clients who are not eligible for any funding source
* Clients may also choose to purchase a cane of their choice at their own expense

Regional Business Managers can determine client hardship at their discretion.

## Supply of Complimentary Cane to Vision Australia Clients

* One complimentary Bevria cane, plus one cane tip will be available to clients who are not eligible for any funding source on an annual basis
* Clients with available funding packages are required to use their package to purchase a cane of their choice
* Clients may also choose to purchase a cane of their choice at their own expense

**Please note:** Where a client is awaiting approval for an individualised funding package they may be eligible for a complimentary cane where deemed clinically necessary. Those who have chosen not to seek funding and who clearly meet funding guidelines, will not be eligible for a complimentary cane.

Canes are not included in the Vision Store display but branches will have a stock of canes and tips for supply as required by referrals and demand.

## Procedure

### Clients with no available funding source

Clients with no available funding source will be supplied with a complimentary Bevria cane where:

* They are undertaking an orientation and mobility (O&M) program with Vision Australia and a specific mobility aid and length is recommended and discussed with the client. They may not have completed the necessary training yet but the training program is underway.
* They have previously undertaken orientation and mobility training for using a specific mobility aid.
* Choice and preference of cane has been discussed with the client by a Vision Australia practitioner (O&M, OT or physiotherapist).
* A current Vision Australia client requires a support cane to meet their mobility needs. In this case it is very important that the guidelines for supplying a support cane are closely adhered to.
* A current Vision Australia client requires an ID/symbol cane for identification purposes only. In this case it is very important that the guidelines for supplying an ID cane are closely adhered to, so that the client does not end up using the ID cane as a long cane

One only complimentary cane and cane tip may be supplied every 12 months; the period starts from the date of initial issue. If the cane is lost or damaged the client will need to purchase a new one (clients who exceed the allocation will be considered on a case by case basis by the Regional Business Manager who will decide whether payment or proportion of payment is required).

The date of issue, size and type of cane and tip needs to be recorded in NetSuite and in the clients’ CMS file to ensure only one complimentary cane and one complimentary tip is issued per year.

Administration Support Officers (ASOs)/ local retail staff are responsible for entering the transaction in NetSuite against the client profile. Practitioners must ensure that they inform their relevant ASOs or local retail staff when they have issued a cane so it can be recorded in NetSuite.

Complimentary canes and tips will be processed on stock sales banking records at no cost, using the 100% Free Issue Code.

Ambutech and other specialty canes can be ordered through Vision Store at the client’s expense or through their funding package (see below for detail).

**Please note:** If the standard Bevria cane does not meet the client’s needs, the client can pay the difference between the complimentary cane and the recommended cane. This is only applied where there is a clinical need, not client preference. A client who chooses a cane outside of the complimentary range without a clinical need, will need to pay the full amount.

### Clients with available funding packages and self- funding clients

Clients with available funding packages or those who choose to self-fund can purchase a cane of their choice through Vision Store

* New long cane users should be referred to an O&M Specialist for an assessment to identify the most suitable cane.
* For clients whose needs have changed since their last cane was issued, an assessment with an O&M Specialist is recommended. Some examples include, changes in eye condition or other medical conditions. .
* For clients awaiting approval of a package, the type, size and cost of the prescribed cane and/or tip and training must be included in the initial assessment or service estimation. Once an individual has been approved for funding for their initial cane and training, subsequent replacement canes, tips and training will be accessed through their relevant package provider.
* For clients awaiting approval of a package who are identified as “high risk”, a discussion should occur with the RBM and RPL regarding assessment for VA free issue cane and training. This is capped at an initial assessment of up to two hours and up to four hours of training. . Once an individual has been approved for funding, subsequent replacement canes and tips will be accessed through their relevant package provider.
* For clients who have an NDIS package, canes can be purchased through a consumables budget.
* Orders may take from 2-6 weeks for delivery pending cane availability. Contact Vision Store Inventory for specialty orders. inventory@visionaustralia.org. For more details about this process, please see [here.](https://docs.visionaustralia.org/AllVisionAustralia/EquipmentSolutions/Processes/08.Custom%20orders.docx)
* Process through Netsuite POS as a specialty item. Payment required prior to order being placed with supplier. Freight or mail costs to be determined as per normal mail costing.

## General Information on Cane Usage

The white cane is one of many aids used by a person who is blind or has low vision - this includes people of all ages.

A cane can assist with safety, mobility, balance and independence i.e. the cane assists with checking for objects and information in a person's path of travel, changes in the walking surface and detects potential hazards such as steps and curbs.

It is important that all clients are assessed by an O&M Specialist to ensure they are prescribed the correct cane that best meets their needs. Training by an O&M Specialist is also necessary to ensure the cane is used correctly and safely. The wrong cane or incorrect use of it can result in a safety risk to the client and/or those around them.

Note that Physiotherapists and Occupational Therapists are also trained to prescribe and train in support canes. Where a client has not previously used a support cane, it is important that they are advised of the opportunity to have a referral for O&M. Best O&M practice is to then work in conjunction with a physiotherapist and receive an O&M safety assessment and training in the environment that best suits the client’s needs. .

OT’s and Physiotherapists who have completed Vision Australia’s Advanced Scope in Orientation and Mobility are able to replace all “like for like” Orientation and Mobility Equipment including cane tips, ID canes, support canes and long canes. Retail Equipment solution staff who have had training in cane replacement are also able to replace “like for like”

Note that there are safety consequences of issuing the wrong length for all types of canes.

## Types of canes available from Vision Australia

White canes provide recognition to others that the user is blind or has low vision. This can be useful in situations such as crowded areas, accessing public transport and when crossing roads. Vision Australia practitioners can now issue four different cane types:

1. Support (Orthopaedic) Canes
Support canes are used as a means of physical support to aid balance for clients who have low vision. These canes can be folding or rigid.
This cane does not preview or detect objects in the path of travel. A support cane aids mobility by broadening a person's base of support and improving balance. This can also increase the user's confidence.
2. **ID Canes**ID canes are often used by clients when they are being guided by another person.
This cane folds, is lightweight, can easily be stored in a bag and can provide some lower body protection
3. Long (Mobility) Canes
These canes are very effective when used to detect obstacles, curbs, steps, uneven ground and or changes in ground surfaces. These canes are either folding or rigid.
For long (mobility) canes in particular, O&M Specialists train users in a standard technique.
4. Telescopic Canes
These canes are principally long canes and are compact in size and weight. Most often this cane is used as an emergency or back up cane.

### Other Canes

Many different brands produce specialist canes that may be preferred by clients. Offering choice for clients is consistent with new funding models and Vision Australia’s person centered approach to services and supports.

## Document Control

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