

Summary report of the Garment Review Information Project

April 2006

Acknowledgements

The Department of Human Services through the Aids and Equipment Program commissioned the Mercy Hospital for Women to undertake the Garment Review Information Project (GRIP).

The GRIP team and the Department of Human Services would like to acknowledge the many people who provided generous input into the review, including:

- The Lymphoedema Association of Victoria (LAV)
- Lymphoedema therapists
- Consumers throughout Victoria
- The current and previous administrators of the Lymphoedema Compression Garment Program (LCGP)
- Tammy Boatman, Occupational Therapist
- Stats Works and
- The GRIP reference group; Janet Bostock, Bill Contoyannis, Mary D'elia, Carolyn Glover (previously Karen Dundules), Barbara Holland, David Lowry and Mary Page.

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Authorised by the State Government of Victoria,
50 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne.

Background

Lymphoedema

Lymphoedema occurs when the lymphatic system does not function properly. It results in the long term swelling of one or more parts of the body, due to the inability of the lymphatic system to drain fluid from the affected area. It occurs most commonly in the arms and legs.

Primary lymphoedema occurs when the lymphatic system is not fully developed at birth. While swelling may occur from birth, it may not become apparent until puberty, pregnancy or even later in life.

Secondary lymphoedema occurs after an injury, an infection, or after a disease, such as cancer, which damages the lymphatic vessels or nodes. Radiotherapy can also disturb the drainage of the lymph fluid from the affected part of the body. Swelling may occur soon after the damage to the lymph system or may occur months or even years later.

Lymphoedema Compression Garment Program

The use of compression garments in conjunction with other appropriate treatments has been found to be effective in managing lymphoedema, thereby increasing the consumer's functional independence and decreasing reliance on carers.

The Lymphoedema Compression Garment Program (LCGP) is a specialist aids and equipment service administered by the Mercy Lymphoedema Clinic at the Mercy Hospital for Women. It provides financial assistance to eligible consumers to subsidise the cost of specialised compression garments for the management of lymphoedema.

Current Criteria for Supplier Selection

The Health Development Group conducted an evaluation of the Lymphoedema Compression Garments Pilot Program in 1998. One of the recommendations of this report was that a preferred supplier process be investigated and negotiated. A process of selection of suppliers was adopted and companies were asked to demonstrate their:

- Capacity to provide a range of custom made and off the shelf garments to the program on a statewide basis,
- Proven record of supplying garments to the lymphoedema community and
- Willingness to work with the program to provide the best possible service at a reasonable cost.

The four companies selected as preferred suppliers were Orthotic and Prosthetic Centre Pty Ltd., Therapist Support Laboratories, Appliance and Limb Pty. Ltd., and Biomet Australia Pty Ltd.

Garment Review Information Project

Technical and aesthetic innovations and improvements in compression garment manufacture, as well as increases in the available range of garments in Australia, have led to dissatisfaction being expressed by both consumers and therapists with the limitations of the preferred list of suppliers.

The Garment Review Information Project (GRIP) was therefore commenced to collect information from potential suppliers, existing suppliers, therapists and consumers to inform the development of a process for the selection of suppliers to the LCGP that reflects the needs of consumers throughout the state of Victoria. The objectives of the GRIP were as follows:

- Identify and review all possible garment suppliers within Australia
- Establish the range of garments supplied
- Review client needs, choice and accessibility of garments
- Review lymphoedema therapists' expectations and choices
- Consider current domestic and international standards for lymphoedema compression garments
- Recommend criteria for supplier selection to the LCGP
- Develop the process for supplier selection

Methodology

The information obtained was predominantly sourced from primary research with three target groups:

- Consumers
- Lymphoedema therapists throughout Victoria and
- Suppliers of compression garments in Australia.

Secondary research was utilised in the exploration, identification and documenting of potential suppliers, established standards for compression garments for lymphoedema and trends in the production and provision of compression garments.

Consumers

Surveys were used to gather information regarding the experiences of consumers when purchasing and wearing compression garments. The surveys were distributed with the assistance of the Lymphoedema Association of Victoria and lymphoedema therapists. Of the 1190 surveys distributed 536 were returned. This information was analysed by Stats Works, Statistical Consultancy & Training Unit, School of Mathematics and Geospatial Sciences, RMIT University.

Focus groups were also held, consisting of 8 to 20 people diagnosed with lymphoedema who had been prescribed compression garments. The meetings were held across Victoria at venues in Ballarat, Bendigo, Doncaster, Geelong, Hamilton, Melbourne city, Mildura, Morwell, and Wangaratta. A line of enquiry was developed to ensure all pertinent issues were covered and that continuity and consistency in the information collected existed. The reference group reviewed the lines of enquiry before finalisation.

Therapists

A questionnaire was developed and sent to all known lymphoedema therapists throughout Victoria. A list of therapists was generated by using the Australasian Lymphoedema Association (ALA) listing of members, information from the LCGP, the Lymphoedema Practitioner Education Group of Victoria's list of prescribers, and internet searches. Of the 90 surveys sent out 29 were returned. As with the consumer survey, this information was analysed by StatsWorks.

A series of focus groups were also held at Bendigo, Melbourne City, Mildura, Wangaratta and Warrnambool. These comprised between 2 and 8 participants. A discussion guide was developed. This was presented to the reference group for comment before finalisation.

Suppliers

A list of suppliers was compiled using various sources including the LCGP, ALA, therapists and contact at the ALA conference in Brisbane in March 2004. Questionnaires were developed in conjunction with the reference group and sent to 21 known suppliers of lymphoedema compression garments, after phone contact had been made to establish their interest. A total of 16 suppliers returned the questionnaires and 15 indicated that they were interested in a further interview.

On-site interviews were conducted with key staff during which a semi-structured questionnaire was worked through. Suppliers were interviewed in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. The lines of enquiry for the interviews were developed after the consumer and therapist focus groups were completed and were approved by the reference group.

Reference Group

A Reference Group was established which consisted of major stakeholders. The representatives formed a steering committee for the project. The following groups were represented:

- Australasian Lymphology Association (ALA)—Mary Page, Lymphoedema Therapist
- Lymphoedema Practitioners Education Group of Victoria (LPEGV)—Janet Bostock, Lymphoedema Therapist
- Lymphoedema Association of Victoria (LAV)—Mary D’Elia, Consumer (Primary Lymphoedema) and Barbara Holland, Consumer (Secondary Lymphoedema)
- Standards representative—Bill Contoyannis (Centre for Biomedical Engineering, Monash University)
- Health Purchasing representative—David Lowry (Department of Human Services)
- Aids and Equipment Committee Representative—Carolyn Glover/Karen Dundules (Department of Human Services)

The ALA and LPEGV each provided a lymphoedema therapist as a representative for the GRIP reference group. Mary Page practises privately in a rural area and Janet Bostock is employed in a public service in a metropolitan area. Each therapist was able to give a different perspective and highlight issues pertaining to practise in urban and rural Victoria, as well as private and public sectors.

Ethics Approval

This study was approved on 28th October 2003 by the Mercy Health and Aged Care Ethics Committee, which adheres to the Department of Human Services, Human Research Ethics Committee format and guidelines.

Results

Consumers

General

It was found that 94% of the consumers were female and 57% were treated by physiotherapists. A further 9% were treated by occupational therapists and 5% by nurses. The remainder did not identify whom they received treatment from. Of those consumers prescribed garments, 59% had secondary lymphoedema and 41% had primary lymphoedema.

It was also identified that 54% of the respondents were treated in a public hospital or clinic, 19% privately and 27% received other services or did not identify which services they received. In relation to the LCGP, 60% of consumers indicated that they were aware of the program and 26% stated that they received funding through the program.

Lymphoedema Compression Garments

Compression garments had been prescribed for 91% of the respondents. However, only 64% of the respondents reported that they were currently wearing a compression garment. The most frequently cited group of reasons for not wearing the prescribed compression garment was as follows:

“The garment wrinkled, caused pain and circulation problems, didn’t fit, didn’t suit the climate or irritated a skin condition”.

As part of the survey consumers rated the importance of a range of factors when choosing a compression garment. The results are detailed in the following table.

Factors considered by consumers when choosing a garment

Factors to be considered	Percentage of consumers who felt these factors were very or quite important
Comfort	90.3%
Durability/Long lasting	86.6%
Therapist’s recommendation	85.6%
Ease of getting on/off	84.7%
Availability	83.0%
Compression grades	77.8%
Fabric type	74.1%
Cost	72.0%
Speed of delivery	66.7%
Colours available	59.9%

It was difficult to compare satisfaction levels for particular brands of garments or satisfaction with the service provided by different companies, due to the small sample size for some brands.

Information gathered through the focus groups confirmed the importance of comfort and fit when choosing a compression garment. Compression was acknowledged as being very important but most consumers relied on their therapist to determine the correct compression.

All groups were supportive of an Australian standard being developed for compression garments and a minimum standard being set for preferred suppliers to the LCGP.

Therapists

General

Most therapists had approximately 6 years experience and were physiotherapists. Nearly all had some lymphoedema training and on average they consulted with 11 consumers with lymphoedema per month.

Therapists stated that they verbally provide information to consumers about the LCGP and 72% reported that a proportion of their consumers received a subsidy via the program.

Lymphoedema Compression Garments

On average therapists prescribe 5 custom made and 6 off the shelf garments per month. The main brands prescribed were JOBST, TSL, Venosan, Juzo, Sigvaris, Medistrumpf and Vikora.

The suppliers most frequently used were TSL, OPC, Biomet, A&L, Smith & Nephew, Reis, Orthopaedic Appliances and Morris Surgical. No therapists indicated that they were dissatisfied with their supplier.

Half of the therapists reported that the number of garment suppliers used by the LCGP did not limit their use of the program. However 13% did indicate that it limited their choice of garments. The remainder did not respond.

As part of the survey therapists rated the importance of a range of factors when choosing a compression garment. The results are detailed in the following table.

Factors considered by therapists when choosing a garment

Factors to be considered	Percentage of therapists who felt these factors were very or quite important
Cost	99.0%
Ease of getting on/off	99.0%
Durability/Long lasting	95.0%
Comfort	93.6%
Speed of delivery	93.0%
Availability	89.0%
Compression grades	71.0%
Fabric type	61.0%
Colours available	41.0%

At the focus groups therapists often indicated that there was a lack of knowledge about standards and garment testing. There was also frustration that garments were categorised into different classes in different countries, and brands could not be easily compared. Therapists stated that they usually had one or two brands that they knew well and used frequently.

Many therapists expressed a reluctance to measure for custom-made garments, in case the measurements were inaccurate. The therapists also felt that clinical support was useful, particularly when new to the treatment of lymphoedema or when assisting consumers with difficult compression issues. The concept of a free phone “hot line” was supported and travelling clinics were also thought to be helpful, particularly for rural consumers.

Therapists also expressed a desire to have samples of garments and fabric swatches to show their consumers, to assist them to understand the limitations of garments.

Suppliers

General

Suppliers provide a range of functions including manufacturing garments, importing garments, supplying to consumers or a mixture of all of these activities. Through the questionnaires and interviews detailed information on what each supplier offers was gathered. The questions asked were guided by information provided by consumers and therapists. A summary of what each supplier offered at the time of interview is provided in the following table.

Lymphoedema Compression Garments

The interviews with suppliers identified significant diversity in practice regarding construction, fabric utilised, testing and quality assurance. As there are currently no Australian standards for lymphoedema compression garments, or for the fabric used in their production, references to standards in the following table refer to those in place in other countries. These standards will be detailed in the following section.

In Australia regulation of medical devices such as lymphoedema compression garments is the responsibility of the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA). The TGA is a unit of the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. The TGA carries out a range of assessment and monitoring activities to ensure therapeutic goods available in Australia are of an acceptable standard, with the aim of ensuring that the Australian community has access, within a reasonable time, to therapeutic advances.

As stated on the TGA website, before any medical devices can be supplied in Australia, details must be included in the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods. As shown in the following table, not all lymphoedema compression garments available within Australia were registered with the TGA at the time of interview.

Summary of what each company offers

Name of company	Links with other orgs.	Bill split	Custom and/or Off the shelf garments	Time for custom made	Whole state covered	Range	Standards	Testing	ISO 9001 etc	TGA listed	Rep. that travels	Clinical support provided	Fitting & Measuring	Postage
Acuhealth	N/A	Yes	Custom	Same day as fitting	No	Own brand	Nil	Limited	No	No	Some home visits	Nil	Yes, \$35 fee	No cost as client picks up
Mary's Magic/Bendigo Health Service	Based within Bendigo Health Service	Yes	Custom	Same day to one week	No	Own brand	Nil	Nil/Unknown	Yes	No	No	Nil	Yes	No cost as client picks up
Milvan's Compression Garments	N/A	Yes	Custom/ Off shelf	Same day to one week	No	Own brand plus Mediven and JOBST	Own brand— Nil Other brands— Yes (see below)	Own brand— Nil/Unknown Other brands— Yes (see below)	No	Own brand— No Other types— Yes	No	Nil	Yes	Usually picked up, otherwise Australia post rates charged
Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre	N/A	Yes	Custom/ Off shelf	Varies with brand	Only hospital patients supplied	Own brand plus Medis-trumpf, Sigvaris JUZO Elvarex Venosan	Own brand— Nil Other brands as detailed further down this table	Own brand— limited Other brands as per manufacturers	Yes	Own brand— No Other types vary	No	Nil	Yes	Nil or \$3 added to the purchase price to assist in covering costs
Therapists Support Laboratory (TSL)	Part owned by OPAL	Yes	Custom/ Off shelf	Goods sent same day as order is received	Yes	Own brand	Nil	Fabric tested once every 3 years	No	No	Some home visits	Yes	Yes	Usually picked up, otherwise \$6.60
Western District Health Service (WDHS)	Based in WDHS	Yes	Custom	Within one week	No	Own brand	Nil	Nil/Unknown	Yes	No	No	Nil	Yes	No cost as client picks up
Appliance & Limb (A&L)	N/A	Yes	Custom/ Off shelf	3 weeks	Yes	Juzo	Meets RAL standards & standard EN ISO 13485	Manufacturer tests at Hohenstein	No	Yes	No	Yes via fax	No	\$6.60

Summary of what each company offers (continued)

Name of company	Links with other orgs.	Bill split	Custom and/or Off the shelf garments	Time for custom made	Whole state covered	Range	Standards	Testing	ISO 9001 etc	TGA listed	Rep. that travels	Clinical support provided	Fitting & Measuring	Postage
Biomet Australia	N/A	Yes	Custom/ Off shelf	2 weeks	Yes	Venosan	Meets RAL standards	Manufacturer tests at Hohenstein & some tests during manufacture	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes via 1800 number	No, although assistance is available on request	\$6 for 1-10 pairs, more than 10 pairs \$10
Cosmac Surgical Supplies	N/A	Yes	Custom/ Off shelf	2-3 weeks	Yes	Gloria-Med, Truform Sigvaris JOBST and Mediven	Truform – unsure, Gloria-Med EC & European GGG quality mark. Others detailed below	Manufacturer tests at Hohenstein	No*	No*	No	Yes via the telephone	No	\$5 plus GST, urgent sent by Post Express for \$6.50
Morris Surgical	OPC are the company's agent in Melbourne	Yes	Custom/ Off shelf	3-4 weeks	Yes	Sigvaris	Meets RAL standards and the Eco Tex standards	Testing by Swiss Testing Authority & some by manufacturer	Yes	Yes	No	Yes via the telephone	No	Australia post rates
Reis Orthopaedic & Surgical Services	N/A	Yes	Custom/ Off shelf	2 weeks	Yes	Mediven	Meets RAL standards and Oko-Text-Standard 100	Tested at Hohenstein & some by manufacturer	Yes	Yes	Rep. will travel	Yes	No	Post Express rate, urgent \$12.80 for air satchel
Smith and Nephew	OPC is the distributor	No	Custom/ Off shelf	3 weeks	Yes	JOBST	Meets RAL standards	Tested at Hohenstein & at manufacturing sites	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Only if fitting is problematic	Australia post rates, post express if urgent

Summary of what each company offers (continued)

Name of company	Links with other orgs.	Bill split	Custom and/or Off the shelf garments	Time for custom made	Whole state covered	Range	Standards	Testing	ISO 9001 etc	TGA listed	Rep. that travels	Clinical support provided	Fitting & Measuring	Postage
Ballarat Health Service	Based at Ballarat Health Service	Yes	Moving from custom to off shelf	2 weeks	No	JOBST Mediven & JUZO	As detailed above for these brands	As detailed above for these brands	Yes Equip	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No cost as client picks up
OAPL Bendigo	Part owned by OAPL— Orthopaedic Appliances & linked to TSL	Yes	Custom/ Off shelf	2 weeks	No	JOBST JUZO Venosan TSL	As detailed above for these brands	As detailed above for these brands	No	Yes bar TSL	No but variety of clinics	Yes	Yes	Approx. \$7.50, varies with size and where the item is being sent
OAPL— Orthopaedic Appliances	Part owner of OAPL Bendigo and TSL	Yes	Custom/ Off shelf	1 week	Yes	TSL Mediven & Vitality range	Mediven— as detailed above TSL & Vitality—Nil	Tested at Hohenstein. See Mediven and TSL details above	Yes Only Mediven	Yes	Yes, provides regional clinics	Yes via telephone	Yes, \$45 fee	\$8 plus GST
Orthotic & Prosthetic Centre (OPC)	Buys from Morris Surgical and Smith & Nephew	Yes	Custom/ Off shelf	3 weeks	Yes	JOBST Sigvaris Other brands on request	As detailed above for these brands	As per manufacturers See JOBST & Sigvaris details above	Yes	Yes	Yes, provides regional clinics	Yes via telephone	Yes \$33 fee	\$6.60 or \$8-\$10 for urgent deliveries

* Processes were underway to address these issues at the time of the interview.

Standards

Australia

As previously stated, there is currently no Australian Standard for compression garments or for the fabric used in their production. In 2003 Standards Australia prepared a draft document for public comment based on a draft document developed for the European community. However this was withdrawn when the European Standard was not agreed upon.

Other countries

In the United Kingdom and Europe, there are various Compression Hosiery standards and compression classes. Despite a great deal of negotiation the European standard is still in draft form (EN 12718:2001) and there has been no agreement on the quality stipulations. However, some countries have established their own standards, as outlined below.

Both HATRA and HOSY are independent testing facilities, which provide the gamut of tests which are essential if the garments are to be labelled compression hosiery. They cannot be sold in Germany without the testing and identification on packaging of their standards.

Oeko-Tex and EMPRA (Swiss Federal Material and Research Institute) are independent research institutes, which provide testing of material and products for establishment of product classes to safeguard consumer health. For example, fibres, yarns, fabrics and accessories are certified for distribution under the Oeko-Tec standard 100, which verifies human and ecological safety.

The USA does not have a comparable testing organization like Hohenstein. For testing compression on Truform garments, they use an MST MK III testing device. The company that provides this device is Salzman Medico of Switzerland.

	Germany	Switzerland	UK	USA
Graduated compression	RAL*—GZ 387 HOSY—Hohenstein Institute	RAL—GZ 387 Hohenstein Institute	British Standard BS 6612— HATRA pressure monitoring device	MST MK III testing device
Durability	RAL—GZ 387	RAL—GZ 387		
Textile screening	Oeko-Tex Standard 100	EMPA Oeko-Tex standard 100 (eco-tex)		Oeko-Tex Standard 100
Quality Control	RAL—GZ 387	RAL—GZ 387		
Testing-frequency	12 months	12 months		

* RAL German Institute for Quality Assurance and Labelling

Discussion

In relation to compression garments there were two key messages from consumers that came from the questionnaires and focus groups. Firstly, consumers rate comfort as the most important factor when choosing a garment. Poor fitting, irritating and wrinkled garments were the major reason consumers prescribed compression garments stopped wearing them. To maximise the options for prescribing therapists and consumers, the selection criteria for the LCGP need to allow for the widest range of garments possible. The wider choice of options will increase the likelihood of the consumer receiving the optimum garment.

It is therefore recommended that the selection criteria no longer include the capacity of the company to service the whole state of Victoria, allowing more localised providers to meet needs where appropriate. Furthermore, suppliers can provide either custom made, off the shelf or both varieties of products.

Secondly, all consumer focus groups were supportive of the idea of a minimum standard being set for preferred suppliers to the LCGP. Therefore, while the selection criteria need to maximise client choice, they still need to set minimum standards for suppliers.

As stated on the TGA website, the Australian community expects that medicines and medical devices in the marketplace are safe and of high quality, and of a standard at least equal to that of comparable countries. After consideration of the standards in place in other countries, it can be seen that all four test for graduated compression. Three of the four countries also use Oeko-Tex Standard 100. It is therefore recommended that suppliers to the LCGP also be able to scientifically test their garments to ensure graduated compression and use the European Eco-Tex Standard 100 certificate to ensure that they contain no substances that are harmful to the skin.

In relation to standards, it is also recommended that only garments registered with TGA be subsidised by the LCGP. This will ensure that TGA is able to regulate these medical devices.

Therapists rated cost as the most important consideration when prescribing a lymphoedema compression garment. It is therefore very important that suppliers to the LCGP provide garments at a competitive price.

While consumers and therapists didn't rate availability as one of the top four factors to be considered when choosing a garment, it was still a significant consideration and from an administrative perspective it is very important. It is recommended that timely supply remain as a selection criteria.

Administratively the ability of the supplier to invoice the client and the LCGP is still vital and effective complaints mechanisms do need to be in place to handle situations where the consumer and/or therapist is not satisfied. It is therefore recommended that the selection criteria specify these requirements, particularly as the new selection criteria may allow new suppliers to supply garments subsidised by the program.

During the project therapists and consumers often identified a lack of information and knowledge about different types of garments. It is therefore recommended that the LCGP have a complete list of products subsidised by the program that is available to therapists and consumers, with contact details available for more detailed information. It would be preferable for suppliers to be able to provide this list electronically with appropriate updates provided to the program.

Many therapists expressed a reluctance to measure for custom-made garments and were concerned about getting such prescriptions wrong. It is therefore felt that a fitting service would be a highly desirable but not essential selection criteria.

Finally, therapists expressed interest in clinical support and a travelling representative for rural areas, making these also highly desirable features of possible future suppliers.

Recommendations

The recommendations of the GRIP are therefore as follows:

Recommendation 1:

The selection criteria no longer include the capacity of the company to service the whole state of Victoria.

Recommendation 2:

Suppliers can provide either custom made, off the shelf or both varieties of products.

Recommendation 3:

Suppliers to the LCGP are able to scientifically test their garments to ensure graduated compression.

Recommendation 4:

Suppliers use the European Eco-Tex Standard 100 certificate to ensure that their garments contain no substances that are harmful to the skin.

Recommendation 5:

Only garments registered with TGA be subsidised by the LCGP.

Recommendation 6:

Suppliers to the LCGP provide garments at a competitive price.

Recommendation 7:

Suppliers to the LCGP must supply garments in a timely manner.

Recommendation 8:

The supplier must be able to invoice the client and the LCGP separately, to ensure administrative efficiency is maintained.

Recommendation 9:

The supplier must have an effective complaints mechanism in place to handle situations where the consumer and/or therapist is not satisfied.

Recommendation 10:

The LCGP have a complete list of products subsidised by the program that is available to therapists and consumers, with contact details available for more detailed information. It would be preferable for suppliers to be able to provide this list electronically with appropriate updates provided to the program.

Recommendation 11:

That the provision of a fitting service by suppliers be considered as a highly desirable selection criterion, although not essential.

Recommendation 12:

That the provision of clinical support by suppliers and a travelling representative for rural areas be considered as a highly desirable selection criterion, although not essential.

Criteria for Supplier Selection

Based on the above recommendations, in order for suppliers to be selected for the LCGP they must be able to demonstrate that they meet the following criteria:

- Compression garments must have been scientifically tested to ensure graduated compression
- Use of European Eco-Tex Standard 100 certificate, which is acknowledged worldwide and guarantees that no substances that are harmful to the skin should be provided
- The compression garments are registered with the TGA
- Competitive pricing
- Timely supply of garments (i.e. custom made garments supplied within 2 weeks)
- Relevant quality standard in business processes (eg. ISO9001)
- Capacity to invoice the consumer and the LCGP separately
- Provision of an electronic list of available garments, including prices, that will be updated as required and can be made available to therapists and consumers

The following criteria would be considered highly desirable:

- Provision of clinical support and education
- Provision of a fitting service
- Provision of a travelling representative

It is also recommended that the selection criteria be adopted as minimum expected benchmarks, and that these benchmarks are reviewed on a bi-annual basis to ensure they are set at an optimal level and that any variations are formally agreed.

Process for Supplier Selection

If the above changes to the selection criteria are approved it is recommended that a transition period of 12 months be granted. During this period existing suppliers to the LCGP who do not currently meet the above criteria will have an opportunity to take the steps necessary to continue supplying garments for the program, or demonstrate satisfactorily why a particular benchmark may not be appropriate. After this 12-month period those who do not meet the criteria will no longer be eligible to supply garments that are subsidised by the LCGP.

New suppliers will be able to apply to supply garments for the LCGP any time during and after this 12-month period.

Other Recommendations

A further recommendation of the report is that the selection criteria form the basis of minimum benchmarks regarding acceptable practice, which can be used to establish formal standards through appropriate standards bodies.

