

## Position Statement Chest Harness

### 1. Chest Harness Definition

A chest harness is a customised strapping system which includes pelvic and trunk supports. The chest harness stabilises a person's body and assists optimal posture for functional movement. The chest harness facilitates comfort, postural symmetry and growth.

### 2. Aids and Equipment

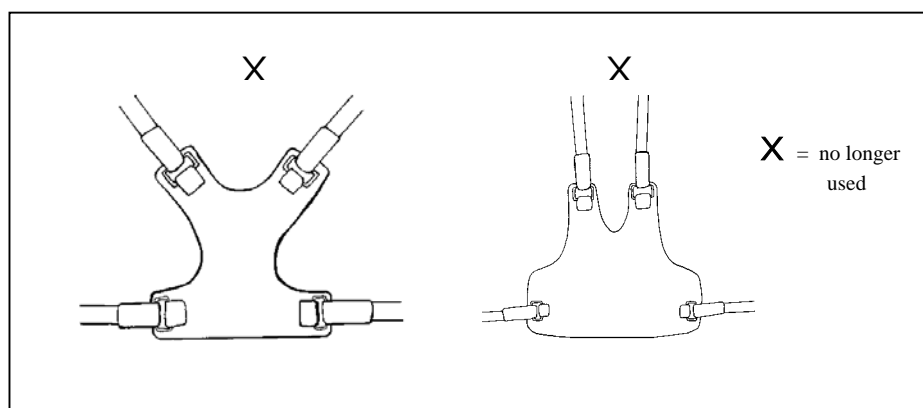
People with physical disabilities must be provided with the essential aids and equipment they need to achieve a quality standard of living that facilitates maximum participation within their community.

Aids and Equipment prescribed must comply with Australian Standards and Regulations where applicable.

People with physical disabilities who use adaptive seating systems or devices have the right to products which are safe and of the highest quality.

### 3. Position

The Spastic Centre is opposed to the manufacture and prescription of chest harnesses with adjustability in the lower two straps (refer diagrams below)



The Spastic Centre has ceased to manufacture these type of harnesses and will not resume production through TASC Seating Service or anyone else.



#### 4. Risk Factors

Harnesses with adjustability in the lower two straps have been proven/associated with the clients airway being obstructed resulting in the clients death. This could occur if:

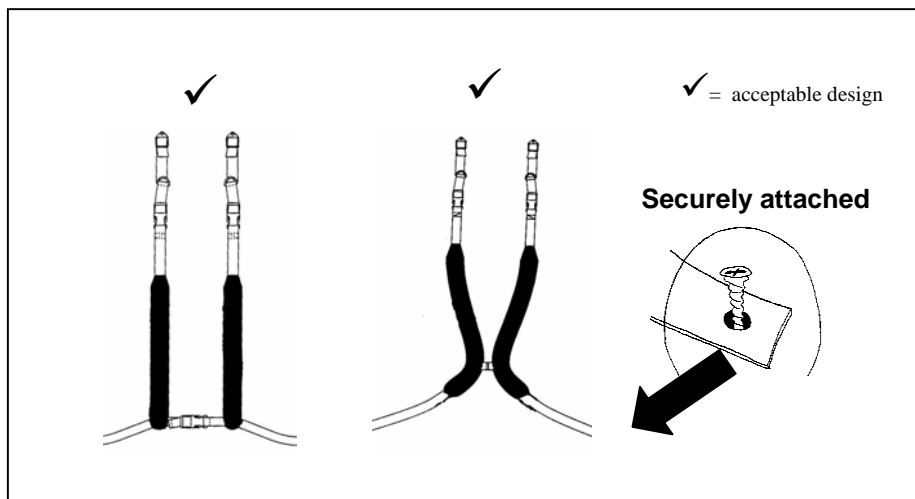
- The lower straps become loose. This may allow the harness to ride up near the client's neck.
- The client slides down the seat.
- The shoulder straps cut across the client's neck. This could happen if the recommended side supports are not in place or if the harness is not positioned in the middle of the client's chest.
- The chest support is done up too tightly.
- The position of the harness is not checked after reclining or sitting the client up.

A harness may move into an unsafe position eg over the clients airway if there is inadequate or non compliance with :

- Family/carerer education
- Prescribing
- Maintenance
- Mounting

#### 5. Recommendations

People with disabilities must be fitted with a safe harness design





The Spastic Centre will manufacture the recommended harnesses as per The Spastic Centre Best Practice Guidelines for Promoting Airway Safety when Prescribing Postural Supports

In addition to a safe design the following safe practices must be followed:

#### 5.1 Education

Education of families and or carers is essential in regards to their understanding of the actual and potential airway safety risks and to ensure that ongoing maintenance occurs.

#### 5.2 Prescribing

- A chest harness must be prescribed by qualified personnel eg Occupational Therapist, Physiotherapist, Orthotists or Seating Consultant
- A chest harness must not be changed without reference to the prescriber
- A chest harness must be prescribed only for the individual client
- The Spastic Centre Prescription Guidelines must be followed.

#### 5.3 Maintenance

- Families must be instructed in the ongoing care and maintenance of the chest harness
- Maintenance instructions must be in a prominent position and permanently attached to the product in such a way that it remains clearly legible with normal use, washing and handling of the products

#### 5.4 Mounting

- The harness must not be mounted to the mobility base eg highchair, stroller with velcro



## **Reference List**

Novak I, Farrelly C, Adderley M. The Spastic Centre Best Practice Guidelines for Promoting Airway Safety when Prescribing Postural Supports. December 2001.

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Miles S. A Case of Death by Physical Restraint: New Lessons from a Photograph. *The Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* 1996;44(3):291- 292

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