



# COMMONWEALTH HOME SUPPORT PROGRAMME FEES POLICY

## 1. POLICY PURPOSE

The National Guide to the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) Client Contribution Framework requires service providers to develop their own Client Contribution arrangements and policy, following a set of principles which aims to ensure that those who can afford to contribute to the cost of their care do so, whilst protecting those most vulnerable. It is designed to support the financial sustainability of the CHSP whilst creating fairness and consistency in the way in which both new and existing clients contribute to the cost of their care.

## 2. AUTHORITY (LEGISLATION OR OTHER)

The Department of Social Services requires Commonwealth Home Support Programme service providers to set a publicly available client contribution policy.

## 3. SCOPE

Julia Creek CHSP ensures that each client, or prospective client, is provided with information (initially and on an ongoing basis) in a format appropriate to their needs to assist them to make support choices and gain an understanding of the support available to them and their rights and responsibilities.

The following Fees Policy principles address the issues of access, equity, affordability, user rights and privacy and ensure that fees generated by the CHSP are used efficiently and for the benefit of CHSP clients.

## 4. POLICY CONTENT

### Principles

Clients have the right:

- To have their fees determined in a way that is transparent, accessible and fair;
- To receive invoices or financial summary that is clear and in a format that is understandable;
- To have their fees reviewed periodically and on request when there are changes to their financial circumstances;
- Not to be denied care and services because of their inability to pay a fee for reasons beyond their control.

Clients have the responsibility:

- To pay any fee as specified in the agreement or negotiate an alternative arrangement with the provider if any changes occur in their financial circumstances;

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- To provide enough information for the approved provider to determine an appropriate level of fee.

## **Fees & Charges Schedule**

Fees charged for support services are set in accordance with the relevant fees policy (as above) and are revised annually in June for the next financial year. Current fee levels are shown in our Fees & Charges Schedule relating to:

- Meals on wheels
- Lunch at Fr Bill Busuttin Community Centre
- Transport
- Domestic assistance
- Personal care
- Home maintenance
- Social support – individual
- Social support – group (formerly centre based day care)
- Nursing care

## **Client Fees**

The Director of Corporate & Community Services is responsible for monitoring fee and fee policy changes for the CHSP and for revising the information in this section of the Policies and Procedures and advising clients of the revisions.

Upon joining Julia Creek CHSP, the CHSP Coordinator undertakes a Fee Assessment based on the individuals circumstances and takes into consideration the following principles:

1. Inability to pay cannot be used as a basis for refusing a service to people who are assessed as requiring a service.
2. All clients assessed as having the capacity to pay are charged fees. This is done in accordance with a scale of fees appropriate to their level of income, amounts of services they use, and any changes in circumstances.
3. CHSP funded agencies charge the full cost of the service where clients are receiving, or have received, compensation payments intended to cover the cost of community care.
4. Clients with similar levels of income and service usage patterns should be charged equivalent fees for equivalent services.
5. Clients with high and/or multiple service needs are not to be charged more than a specified maximum amount of fees in a given period, irrespective of actual amounts of services used.
6. For purposes of this policy, solicited donations for services are equivalent to fees and are subject to all provisions of this policy.
7. Fees charged will not exceed the actual cost of service provision.
8. Fees are not to be charged in respect of services such as information, advocacy and friendly visiting.
9. The fee charged for a service is all-inclusive and cover all material used in delivery of the service.

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10. Fee collection is administered efficiently and the cost of administration is less than the income received from fees.
11. The revenue from fees is used to enhance and/or expand CHSP services.
12. Procedures for the determination of fees, including assessment criteria, are clearly documented and publicly available (in the Client Handbook).
13. Procedures for the determination and collection of fees take into account the situation of special needs groups.
14. Assessment of a person's capacity to pay fees is as simple and unobtrusive as possible, with any information obtained treated confidentially.
15. Consumers and their advocates have the right of appeal against a given fee determination.

## Fee Guidelines

### *Support with a partial or full exemption from the CHSP fees policy*

Fees are not charged for information, advisory and advocacy services, and review services, or individual social support services. Standard fees apply to Meals (home or centre), and Transport services. Where clients only receive these supports, an income assessment is **not** required.

### *Fee Reduction*

Council recognises that some clients have a limited capacity to pay for support; however, the payment of a fee for service by clients who have the capacity to pay is endorsed. People who are assessed as being in need of support are eligible to receive support, regardless of their capacity to pay.

In assessing clients' ability to pay for support the following applies:

- Clients can nominate whether they wish to be considered for a fee reduction. Clear guidelines are available to indicate the circumstances where a fee reduction might be appropriate. In such circumstances, the clients may be asked to complete a Fee Reduction Form.
- To assist clients, their general household circumstances are determined (whether they live alone, are part of a couple or family living together, live in a household of unrelated people or are in some other circumstance).
- The CHSP Coordinator takes into account any exceptional and unavoidable expenses the client may have, such as high pharmaceutical expenses.
- The CHSP Income Assessment Form is completed by the client, or their representative. It may be left with the client for completion and collection at a later date or completed at the time of the initial visit. When completed, the original is retained by us in the clients file. The client may request a copy.
- The client is given clear instructions about whose income is to be assessed (single, or couple).
- Information obtained about a client's income is treated as private and confidential.
- Clients are asked to advise us within 30 days of any significant changes in circumstances which may alter their status in relation to the payment/non-payment of fees.
- In cases of hardship or where clients request assistance, the fee can be waived. Clients are advised and reassured that support will not be refused or withdrawn if they are unable to pay the fee.

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- Clients are advised of the result of their application for a fee reduction within 15 working days from the date of lodgement.
- The Director of Corporate & Community Services makes the decision.

#### *Clients in receipt of other CHSP support*

Where a client is in receipt of support from other CHSP funded services and their total income is less than twice the Age Pension, negotiations with the Manager(s) of the other service(s) occur (with the client's permission) to ensure that the client is not required to pay more than 20% of their income for the support provided.

#### *Compensable client*

Clients who are applying for a compensation payment that may cover all or part of their community care costs follow the usual fee assessment process and are charged the appropriate fees for their level of compensation. We liaise with the client's legal representative regarding the unit cost of services up to the point of a compensation settlement. At the point of settlement, any monies designated for community care costs will be recovered directly by us, less fees already paid. Support delivered after compensation settlement is charged at the amount determined in the compensation package. If not specific amount has been identified, clients are charged as per their assessed income.

### **Property**

All equipment, purchased by Council and provided to support the client remains the property of our organisation, are recorded on an equipment register by the relevant Home Care Worker and are maintained by Council. Equipment hired or purchased for the client as part of the package (and paid for by the package) will remain the property of the client once the package ceases to be provided. The client is responsible for the maintenance and repair of equipment.

### **Reporting**

Grant agreement obligations include a requirement for providers to report the dollar amount collected from client contributions.