



12. COMMUNITY SERVICES POLICIES

12.1 HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE

12.1.3 Fees

Background & Issues

Support provided by organisations funded through the Home and Community Care (HACC) Program, must adhere to the National HACC Fees Policy principles adapted for Western Australia in the WA HACC Fees Policy.

Objectives

These policies and principles seek a contribution from clients towards the cost of the HACC support they receive, at a level that is fair and affordable, but sufficiently flexible to adapt to individual circumstances.

Area of Application

In all cases:

- An assessment of a client's need for support precedes identification of a client's capacity to contribute to the cost of the support service (the fee).
- No client will be refused support because of an inability to pay fees.
- Mechanisms limit the total fees a client can pay, and allow assessed fees to be reduced in individual circumstances.

Revenue from client fees will be used for the provision of HACC support in Western Australia.

Policy Measures

Capacity to Contribute

In assessing clients' capacity to contribute to the cost of the support they receive, the Shire of Manjimup HACC uses the following procedures:

- 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).
 - Clients are given clear instructions about whose income is to be assessed (single, couple).
- Clients are asked to identify whether they are on Income Level 1, 2 or 3.
 - The Income Assessment Form only needs to be completed by clients, or their representative if seeking a reduction in the assessed fees for support. It may be left with the clients for completion and collection at a later date or completed at the time of the initial visit. When completed, the original is retained by the clients, and a copy may be kept by the service providers.
 - The Income Assessment Form allows clients to record information about their pension or beneficiary status, or if necessary, their level of income.



12. COMMUNITY SERVICES POLICIES

12.1 HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE

12.1.3 Fees

- ❑ Clients can nominate whether they wish to be considered for a fee reduction. Clear guidelines are available to indicate the circumstances where fees reductions might be appropriate. In such circumstances, clients will be requested to complete an Income Assessment/Fees Reduction Form.
- ❑ Clients can choose not to complete an income assessment but, as a result, will be charged the full fee on their identified income level.
- ❑ Clients are asked to advise the Shire of Manjimup HACC Manager as soon as practical any significant changes in their financial circumstances which may affect their level of contribution.
- ❑ Clients are encouraged to raise with the service provider any difficulties they have in paying fees. Clients shall be advised and reassured that support will not be refused or withdrawn if they are unable to pay.
- ❑ Clients are advised of their right to lodge an appeal if they have any concerns about their identified income level or the extent of fees charged. The appeals process is described further below.
- ❑ Information obtained about a client's income is treated as private and confidential. Written records retained by the Shire of Manjimup HACC will be stored securely. Access must be in accordance with the client's expressed permission, the Community Care Common Standards and relevant legislation.

Payment of Fees

All clients are informed of the WA HACC Fees Policy in discussions about the support plan, and prior to service delivery. A copy of the WA HACC Standard Fees Schedule is to be provided to them. Clients will be given reasonable notice of any changes to the Fees Schedule.

In charging fees the Shire of Manjimup HACC applies the following principles, consistent with the National principles and the WA HACC Fees Policy:

- ❑ Payment of fees that contributes to the cost of HACC support is only sought from clients who have the capacity to pay.
- ❑ Clients who do not have the capacity to pay will have their fee reduced in accordance with the WA HACC Fees Policy Fee Reduction Guidelines.
- ❑ Fees for support are all-inclusive and cover all materials used in the delivery of the support, unless otherwise stated.
- ❑ Fees will not exceed the actual unit costs of service provision.



12. COMMUNITY SERVICES POLICIES

12.1 HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE

12.1.3 Fees

Compensable Clients

Clients who are applying for a compensation payment that may cover all or part of their community care costs will be charged the appropriate fees for their level of income.

Up to the point of settlement, the Shire of Manjimup HACC will liaise with the client's legal representatives to identify the client's capacity to contribute according to income level and charged the appropriate fee.

At the point of settlement, any monies designated for community care costs will be recovered directly by the Shire of Manjimup HACC, less fees already paid. HACC support provided after the point of settlement should be charged according to the identified amount set aside for community care in the compensation package. If no amount has been identified the client should be charged according to their identified level of income.

If a compensable client has expended their payment by way of compensation or damages, they will cease to be a compensable client and must be treated as any other HACC eligible client with support provided according to assessed need with fees charged according to income level. If the assessed fees cause hardship to the client they would need to complete an Income Assessment/Fee Reduction Form.

Fees Schedule

The Shire of Manjimup Council has determined the fees for support services it provides. The current Fees Schedule is contained in the Shire of Manjimup Budget July 2011/2012. The Shire of Manjimup Council reviews the Fees Schedule annually.

Fees Cap

Some clients receive several support services per week from one or more service providers. Under the policy, clients receiving a number of support services from one or more HACC service providers are protected from paying excessive fees by applying a 'Fees Cap'. This cap relates to the maximum amount (cap) clients will pay per week.

The Fees Cap for clients in receipt of the maximum age pension rates aligns with maximum contributions recipients of other Australian Government community care packages pay.

The Fees Cap, as at July 2011 is:

Income	Fees Cap
Level One: Full pensioner or equivalent pension eligibility income	\$58 per week
Level Two: Part pensioner or equivalent pension eligibility income	\$70 per week
Level Three: Non-pensioner	\$142 per week



12. COMMUNITY SERVICES POLICIES

12.1 HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE

12.1.3 Fees

The Fees Cap applies equally for clients receiving support individually or jointly. For example, the Fees Cap for a single maximum rate pensioner is \$58.00 a week. Likewise the total fees payable or Fees Cap for a maximum rate pensioner couple living in the one household is also \$58.00 a week.

In accordance with the agreed National Fees Principles, meals (delivered to home or centre), podiatry, transport and home modification are excluded from the Fees Cap.

Services with a Partial or Full Exemption from the WA HACC Fees Policy

Fees will not be charged for:

- Social support that involves volunteers home visits and Telecross telephone support services
- Counselling/support, information and advocacy that involves advisory, advocacy, counselling support and carer support/carers support groups, or
- Other HACC services - client care coordination, provision of information, assessment and review.

Collection of Fees

Clients are advised of their fees in writing. The written notification includes:

- ❑ a statement of the number of units of support to be received, in accordance with the agreed support plan
- ❑ the total fees payable, including any fee reduction, or the application of a Fees Cap.

Coordination of Fees Collection with Other HACC Services

Information will be collected from clients about other HACC support they receive, and the charges that apply. Where other service providers are involved, the Shire of Manjimup HACC will explain the application of the Fees Cap and ask for permission to contact the other service provider(s) regarding the calculation and payment of fees in accordance with the Fees Cap.

If permission is given, the Shire of Manjimup HACC will contact the relevant HACC service provider to negotiate the application of the Fees Cap and fees collection.

Refusal to Pay

If a client is identified as being in arrears, without prior arrangement, the service provider will contact and/or visit the client to explore the reasons for non-payment. The client will be advised of their right to have an advocate present during the visit.

Depending on the circumstances a number of fee payment options may be considered including the client paying the outstanding amount in instalments or reducing the outstanding amount. The ongoing fee should also be reviewed to consider whether there is a case for fee reduction in accordance with the WA HACC Fees Policy Fee Reduction Guidelines. The client will be informed of the outcome of this process in writing.



12. COMMUNITY SERVICES POLICIES

12.1 HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE

12.1.3 Fees

Further visits may be considered and all reasonable attempts to negotiate with the client should be made to arrive at a mutually agreed fee. The client should be made aware of their right to appeal and use the services of an advocate. If the client still fails to pay the agreed outstanding amount, a written reminder will be issued, requesting payment within 14 days.

Once all avenues have been explored, the Shire of Manjimup Council will decide how to manage the debt. The client will be informed in writing of the service provider's decision and will have their right of appeal explained to them.

Appeals

Clients, or their advocates, have the right of appeal if they are unhappy with any aspect of income assessment/fee reduction or fee setting processes. All clients shall be advised of this right and the process of appeal at the time of assessment and subsequent reviews.

The process for appeal endorsed by the Shire of Manjimup HACC is:

- The client contacts the Manager about their concerns.
- The Manager acknowledges the approach in writing within 7 working days and arranges to meet with the client to discuss the situation.

The Manager verifies that:

- ◆ The client is appropriately supported or represented by a carer, guardian or advocate.
 - ◆ The correct fees have been set for the client's current circumstances.
 - ◆ Fee reduction avenues have been explored.
 - ◆ The client correctly understands the fee outcome.
- A client who appeals the level of fees charged will receive a written statement of the outcome of their appeal within 7 working days of a decision being made and advised about any further steps they may take.
 - Contact details of independent advocacy services (Appendix A), which may be available to negotiate the payment of fees on the client's behalf, will also be provided.
 - If this process does not resolve the issue the Shire of Manjimup Council and/or the client may refer the matter to an Independent Appeals Tribunal for resolution.

No client will be disadvantaged or penalised as a result of lodging an appeal.

If appropriate, the service provider will negotiate with the client to reduce the disputed fee while the appeal is being considered.



12. COMMUNITY SERVICES POLICIES

12.1 HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE

12.1.3 Fees

Appendix A

Useful Contacts

Advocare

Freecall™: 1800 655 566

www.advocare.org.au

Unit 1, Byblos House

190 Abernethy Road

Belmont WA 6104

Telephone: (08) 9479 7566

Fax: (08) 9479 7599

Email: rights@advocare.org.au

CARERS WA

255 Walcott Street

NORTH PERTH WA 6006

Tel: 08 9444 5922

Fax: 08 9444 8966

24 Hour Freecall: 1800 242 636

1300 CARERS (227377)

Web: <http://www.carerswa.asn.au/>

Disability Services Commission

146-160 Colin Street,

West Perth WA 6005

General enquiries: Phone (08) 9426 9200

Main fax: (08) 9226 2306

Teletypewriter: (08) 9426 9315

Country callers: Freecall 1800 998 214

Email: dsc@dsc.wa.gov.au

Health Consumers' Council WA (Inc)

GPO Box C134

PERTH WA 6839

The Health Consumers' Council office is situated at:

Unit 13/14 Wellington Fair

4 Lord Street

PERTH WA 6000

Telephone: (08) 9221 3422

Freecall: 1800 620 780

Facsimile: (08) 9221 5435

Email: info@hconc.org.au



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12.1 **HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE**
12.1.3 Fees

The Office of Health Review

Level 12, St Martin's Tower
44 St Georges Terrace
PERTH WA 6000
GPO Box B61
PERTH WA 6838
Phone: (08) 9323 0600
Facsimile: (08) 9221 3675
Country Free Call: 1800 813 583
TTY: (08) 9323 0616

OMBUDSMAN WESTERN AUSTRALIA*

Level 12
44 St Georges Terrace
PERTH WA 6000
Phone: **(08) 9220 7555**
Facsimile: **(08) 9325 1107**
Email: mail@ombudsman.wa.gov.au

- * The Ombudsman WA only has jurisdiction to consider matters relating to HACC services provided under the management/sponsorship of a local authority or another State government body.

Administration

HACC Manager/ Coordinator

Adoption and Date Due for Revision

ADOPTED 12 June 2003
REVIEWED 9 December 2010
REVIEWED 18 August 2011
NEXT DUE FOR REVIEW August 2012

The Administration of this Policy is by Community Services.