

PROCEDURE – COMMONWEALTH HOME SUPPORT PROGRAM (CHSP) – CLIENT CONTRIBUTION



Department: Finance

Section: Finance

Position: Finance Manager

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PURPOSE

This procedure provides a standard framework (promoting equality) for Timboon and District Healthcare Service (TDHS) to collect client contributions for those receiving services through the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) from those individuals who can afford to contribute whilst providing safeguards for those who are financially disadvantaged. This procedure has been determined using the National Guide to the CHSP client contribution framework which allows for a flexible approval on a per client basis to determine the applicable fees

TARGET AUDIENCE

For all stakeholders of the Commonwealth Home Support Program delivered by TDHS.

BACKGROUND

TDHS is committed to delivering high-quality services through CHSP which provides entry-level support to older people aged 65 years and over (50 years and over for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people) to remaining living at home and in their community. In line with this commitment, this Client Contribution procedure has been established to ensure transparent, fair, and sustainable financial arrangements.

DEFINITIONS

CHSP: Commonwealth Home Support Program

Client Contribution: the fee payable by the individual using the service

Client: the individual receiving the service

PROCEDURE

Client Contribution Principles

TDHS is committed to following the principles within the Commonwealth Home Support Program Manual 2025-2027. These principles are:

1. **Consistency:** All clients who can afford to contribute to the cost of their care should do so. Client contributions should not exceed the actual cost of service provision.
2. **Transparency:** Client contribution policies should include information in an accessible format and be publicly available, given to, and explained to, all new and existing clients.
3. **Hardship:** Individual policies should include arrangements for those who are unable to pay the requested contribution
4. **Reporting:** Grant agreement obligations include a requirement for service providers to report the dollar amount collected for client contributions.
5. **Fairness:** The Client Contribution Framework should consider the client's capacity to pay and should not exceed the actual cost to deliver the services. In administering this, service providers need to consider partnered clients, clients in receipt of compensation payments and bundling of services.
6. **Sustainability:** Revenue from client contributions should be used to support ongoing service delivery and expand the services WDHS are currently funded to deliver.

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Intake

TDHS will complete an initial assessment for each client who has been deemed eligible to receive services under the Commonwealth Home Support Program. At this initial assessment an Income Declaration Form will need to be completed to assess whether the individual will be required to pay a client contribution fee for the services received. This income declaration will be completed annually in conjunction with a review of services, or a review can be requested if there is a change in financial circumstances.

TDHS uses the Department of Health and Aged Care, Schedule of fees and charges to determine three income brackets (low, medium, and high) which will determine what fee an individual is required to pay.

Low level: If your income thresholds meet the below criteria, you will be assessed as having low income.

- If you receive a full or part pension
- If you have a health card
- If you are single and your before tax income is less than \$32,331.00 per year
- If you are a couple and your before tax income is less than \$25,053.60 per year (this is your combine income divided by two)

Medium level: If your income thresholds meet the below criteria, you will be assessed as having medium income.

- If you are single and your before tax income is between \$32,331 and \$62,332.40 per year
- If you are a couple and your before tax income is less than \$25,053.60 and \$46,668.40 per year (this is your combine income divided by two)

High level: If your income thresholds meet the below criteria, you will be assessed as having high income.

- If you are single and your before tax income is above \$62,332.40 per year
- If you are a couple and your before tax income is above \$47,668.40 per year (this is your combine income divided by two)

The Department of Health and Aged Care update the Schedule of Fees and Charges on the 1st of January, 20th of March, 1st of July and 20th of September each year therefore the above rates are subject to change. For the current rates please go to 'Schedule of Fees and Charges for Residential and Home Care | Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care' :

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/schedule-of-fees-and-charges-for-residential-and-home-care?language=en>

Setting of Fees

The service fees will be reviewed annually with any fee changes effective from 1st July. Any fee changes will be communicated to clients (and their decision makers/advocates) in writing prior to the change. The notice will be provided at least 30 days before the price increase takes effect. The new rates will be determined using the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and The National Guide to the Client Contribution Framework.

Couples

Client contribution arrangements only apply to CHSP clients. This is particularly relevant where services are provided to partnered clients or CHSP clients who are sharing. Where both individuals are CHSP clients they

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will not be asked to contribute separately. For example, if a one-hour cleaning service is provided to the couple then the contribution amount will reflect only one hour (not one hour per client).

Multiple Service Access Bundling

In cases where multiple services are provided concurrently, TDHS will consider bundling the contribution amount to ensure the cost of the combined activities are not prohibitive. For example, where a client receives an hour of social support, a meal at this activity as well as transport to and from, they may be unable to pay the relevant amount for each individual service type delivered through that one instance of social support. TDHS will manage this on a case-by-case basis.

Invoicing and Methods of Payment

Clients will be invoiced for services monthly in arrears. Payment is required within 30 days. TDHS preferred payment method is electronic bank transfers however cash, cheque, debit/credit card and direct debit payment options are available. If a client is unable to pay for the services being provided, they need to submit a request to negotiate their fees in writing to Community Care Supervisor detailing the reasons as to why they cannot pay for their services and provide supporting evidence. This request will be reviewed and if required additional information requested. The outcome of this request will be decided by either the Finance Manager or Director of Community Health.

Non-payment of Fees

TDHS will work with the client to set up a payment plan if required to pay any outstanding debts, all reasonable attempts to negotiate with the client will be made to arrive at a mutually agreed amount. If the client refuses to pay the outstanding amount or fails to follow through on the agreed payment plan and it has been determined that the ability to pay is not an issue, the Community Care Supervisor will contact the client to advise that services will be suspended until payment is made, this will be a verbal conversation followed up with a written letter.

Hardship, Waivers and Appeals

TDHS recognises that clients may experience financial hardship that affects their ability to pay contributions. In such cases, staff must follow procedures to assess the client's circumstances and, where appropriate, provide support to reduce fees or apply for a waiver. Clients or their advocates have the right to appeal any fee determination they consider unfair or unaffordable. Appeals must be reviewed promptly and documented, and clients must be informed of the outcome in writing. Fees for CHSP cannot be collected while a client's hardship application is being processed.

To request a fee reduction or waiver, a client must complete a 'Financial Hardship Assessment Form' and submit it to the Community Care Supervisor. This form will be assessed and a decision communicated to the client once completed.

Once approval has been gained, the client records in TrakCare will be changed accordingly and the form will be filed in the client's medical record.

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Re-negotiation of co-contributions can occur when a client's financial situation changes. The co contributions can be reviewed upon request from the client or TDHS. Clients who have their co contributions reduced or waived will not be treated differently.

KEY ALIGNED DOCUMENTS

Policy – Financial Management
Procedure – Commonwealth Home Support Program
Financial Hardship Assessment Form

KEY LEGISLATION, ACTS & STANDARDS

Aged Care Act 2024 (Cth)
Aged Care Rules 2025
Aged Care Financial and Prudential Standards 2025
Strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards 2025

REFERENCES

Commonwealth Home Support Program Program Manual 2025-2027
Client Contribution Policy, Southern Cross Care WA
Client Contribution Policy, Western District Health Service

EVALUATION

NA

DOCUMENT DEVELOPMENT / REVIEW PROCESS

This document will be reviewed and updated annually or following substantial changes to relevant legislation, regulation or safety and quality standards.

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