

# Commonwealth Home Support Program Client Contribution Policy

## Policy Statement

The Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) is an Australian Government subsidised programme to help older people remain independent and, in their homes, and communities for longer. Carers also benefit from services provided through the CHSP. The Framework aims to ensure that clients who can afford to contribute to the cost of their care do so, while protecting those most vulnerable. The Fees Policy aligns with the National Client Contribution Framework principles.

## Community Care Fee Principles

All clients will be informed about Community Care's CHSP Fee Policy prior to service commencement. Following Council's annual budget process clients will be informed in writing about any changes to the Fees Schedule and or Fee Policy.

Clients will receive a copy of this policy upon intake, a schedule of fees relevant to their service and clear information on how to request hardship support.

## Client Contribution Framework Principles:

- **Consistency:** All clients who can afford to contribute to the cost of their care should do so.
- **Transparency:** Policies will be made available in an accessible format and publicly available. Information on Community Care fees will be provided to clients in writing on an annual basis and prior to service commencement. A copy of the Community Care Fee Policy will be made available on the Greater Dandenong City Council website or be made available on request.
- **Hardship:** For clients who are unable to pay the requested contribution due to hardship, a fee review will be offered providing support options.
- **Reporting:** Community Care will report the dollar amount collected from client contributions, as per the CHSP Grant Agreement.
- **Fairness:** Fees will consider a client's capacity to pay. Community Care will consider partnered clients and clients in receipt of compensation when determining fee levels.
- **Sustainability:** Revenue from client contributions will be used to support ongoing service delivery and expand the services that providers are currently funded to deliver.

## Clients Responsibilities:

- Pay agreed fees or discuss alternative arrangements if financial circumstances change
- Provide sufficient information to enable Community Care to assess fees appropriately

## Invoicing and Payment Methods:

- Clients will be sent a monthly invoice for services in arrears.
- You can pay your City of Greater Dandenong invoice by mail, online, phone, BPAY, Australia Post, or in person at one of the Council's Customer Service Centres.

## Hardship Provisions

Clients experiencing financial hardship may request a review of their fees. The process includes:

- Review of the client circumstances and ability to pay.
- Completion of a fee assessment form.
- Temporary or permanent adjustments based on individual circumstances.

### **Non-Payment of Fees**

- If payment is more than 30 days overdue without prior arrangement, Community Care will contact the client to discuss reasons for non-payment.
- Where fees are unpaid, Community Care will review the client's ability to pay. Options such as instalment plans or fee reductions may be considered depending on individual circumstances.
- Community care will make all reasonable efforts to reach a mutually agreed fee arrangement. The client will be made aware of their right to appeal any decision and may choose to involve an advocate.
- If the agreed outstanding amount remains unpaid, a written reminder will be issued requesting payment within 30 days.
- Where no resolution is reached, and the issue is not related to financial hardship, Community Care may review service continuity. If a client fails to pay agreed outstanding amounts the Coordinator and/or Manager will decide how to manage the debt. Any decision will be communicated in writing along with information on avenues of appeal.

## Review and Compliance

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains current and responsive. Updates will reflect changes in:

- CHSP guidelines and funding arrangements
- Council government policies and directives
- Identified community needs and service delivery priorities

## Related Documents

- National Guide to the CHSP Client Contribution Framework
- CHSP Client Contribution Framework
- CHSP Programme Manual