

Document Name:	Client Contribution Policy
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1. Purpose

To support employees, volunteers, students, contractors and board members of Whittlesea Community Connections (WCC) to effectively administer WCC's Commonwealth Home Support Program funded Transport Service, particularly the Federal Government requirement to collect client contribution fees.

2. Objective

To provide employees, volunteers and board members and clients with a clear understanding of the mandatory fee collection and reporting obligations as part of the Commonwealth Home Support Program and the hardship provisions

3. Scope

This policy applies to employees, volunteers, students, contractors working in, and clients accessing, WCC's Commonwealth Home Support Program funded Transport Service.

4. Definitions

<u>Client Contribution Fee:</u>	Is the payment client makes towards the service received.
<u>A Trip</u>	Is a one way leg of a return journey. A return journey is two trips. Clients will be contributing to each transport trip taken.
<u>Local trip</u>	Travel within City of Whittlesea
<u>Surrounding trip</u>	Travel to and within City of Hume, Darebin and Banyule
<u>Long distance trip</u>	Travel outside of surrounding LGA's

5. Policy

WCC's Contribution Policy has been developed to align with the Federal Government's Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) Client Contribution Framework which includes the following principles.

- **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.
- **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.
- **Hardship:** Individual policies should include arrangements for those who are unable to pay the requested contribution.
- **Reporting:** Grant agreement obligations include a requirement for service providers to report the dollar amount collected from client contributions.
- **Fairness:** The Client Contribution Framework should take into account the client's capacity to pay and should not exceed the actual cost to deliver the services. In administering this,

service providers need to take into account partnered clients, clients in receipt of compensation payments and bundling of services.

- **Sustainability:** Revenue from client contributions will be used to support ongoing service delivery and expand the services providers are currently funded to deliver.

These principles are applied to the charging, collection and reporting of client contributions.

5.1 Charging Fees:

It is the expectation of WCC that clients financially contribute to transport services accessed unless they are assessed to be experiencing financial hardship.

WCC will take an individualised approach when collecting contribution payments and ensure most vulnerable or disadvantaged community members can continue to access the service.

- WCC's Transport assessment will assist in determining a client's ability to financially contribute to their transport service. Clients will be required to disclose their own unique circumstances that cause hardship and the barriers faced in relation to making contribution payments. Assessment as to whether or not a person is able to contribute will be based on an individual's circumstances such as their income, housing tenure, expenses etc.
- Flexible arrangements such as waiving payments for a specified period of time or 'no charge' will be used where necessary to ensure access of service. Flexible arrangements must be approved by the relevant Manager.
- The client's service agreement will document WCC's decision of charging or not charging the client contribution fee.
- Clients will be informed of this policy and fee for service at the time of intake.
- Clients (at the time of assessment) will also be encouraged to contact WCC at any stage if their financial circumstances change.
- Clients will be informed at assessment of their right to complain/appeal against WCC's decision to charge a contribution fee.
- Client contribution fees will be reviewed annually as part of the client annual review process.
- WCC will provide at least 30 days' notice to clients if there is to be an increase to the contribution fee.

5.2 Cancellation Fees

A minimum of 24 hours notice is required for cancellation of both recurring and one off transport bookings. Cancellations with less than 24 hours notice will incur the full cost of the contribution fee.

5.3 Collection of Contribution Fees

- Payment, in arrears will be direct debited at the beginning of each month from a credit or debit card or savings account.
- WCC will require clients to complete a Care Connect request so that clients provide a completed direct debit or credit card authority form.
- Invoices will be provided to clients via email or post within 7 days of direct debit payment.

5.3 Non Payment of Fees

- Clients will be considered in arrears if direct debit payments have been declined twice and payment has not been arranged within 14 days of invoice and without any prior communication with WCC.
- WCC will make contact with the client and explore the reason/s for non-payment including any changes to the client's circumstances; depending on the circumstances, WCC may consider a number of payment options including reduced fees, instalments or waive debt. The mutually agreed payment arrangement will be provided to the client in writing by WCC.

- If the reason for debt is not financial hardship and client is refusing to make payment services may be ceased or suspended. In this circumstance, WCC will inform client of decision in writing along with informing the client of their right to appeal WCC's decision.

6. Contact

For questions about this Policy, please contact CEO WCC.

7. Authority

This Policy is approved by WCC Board and will be reviewed biennially

Related documents

Related procedures, guidelines, forms etc.	CHSP Program Manual 2022 – 2023
Related frameworks	The National Guide to CHSP Contribution Framework
Related policies	
Relevant legislation or standards	

Document Change History

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V1	Endorsed		Belinda Leon	Board	October 2022

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