

POLICY – QCSS FEES AND CONTRIBUTIONS

1.0 Program Overview:

The Queensland Community Support Scheme (QCSS) services provides support to people who have a long term disability, chronic illness, mental health or other condition that impacts on their day to day functional capacity and ability to participate in the community.

The Queensland Government requires that all people in receipt of QCSS supports should contribute, where possible, to the cost of their support through payment of fees.

2.0 Statement:

When setting and implementing fees, the ALARA approach aligns with the following principles:

Consistency: All clients who can afford to contribute to their cost of care should do so. Client Contributions will not exceed the cost of service provision.

Transparency: This policy will be available in accessible formats and be publicly available, given to, and explained to, all new and existing clients of the QCSS.

Hardship: This policy will outline the arrangements for those who are unable to pay the requested contribution

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

Fairness: ALARA takes into account the client's capacity to pay and will not exceed the actual cost to deliver services. In administering this ALARA will 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 enhance and/or expand QCSS supports to eligible people.

3.0 Scope:

This policy relates to fees (co-contributions) payable to the organisation for services and supports provided under the Queensland Community Support Program.

ALARA reserved the right to grandfather co-contributions for existing Community Care clients in receipt of service from ALARA where the level of co-contribution created a barrier to transition.

4.0	Effective Date:	Created:	1 July 2019
		Reviewed:	July 2021
		Reviewed:	July 2022

5.0 Content:

Setting of Fees

The Queensland Government requires all providers of QCSS services to collect client contributions (fees) for QCSS services.

When determining fee levels the following is taken into account:

- The cost to ALARA to provide a particular service including overhead costs like insurance and back office support. This is referred to as the unit cost.
- Any funding body recommended or prescribed levels.
- Annual Movements in the Consumer Price Index (CPI)
- Award increases, industrial trends or decisions that impact on ALARA's costs.
- The level of indexation paid to ALARA by the funding body
- Comparisons with other providers

The procedure for determining fees will be consistent and fair. Individuals with similar levels of disposable income and service usage patterns will be charged equivalent fees for equivalent services.

Fee (co-contribution) schedules will be reviewed annually with any fee increases effective from 1 July.

Refer to: *QCSS Schedule of Fees (Co-contributions for the Queensland Community Support Scheme)*

This policy will be publically available and given and explained to all clients in a format that is relevant to their needs (and their decision makers/advocates) when commencing with the service, at the service review or on-request. The

fee levels applicable to each service type and payment arrangements will be outlined in the Service Agreement.

Compensation Payments and Fee for Service

As required by the funding body, ALARA QLD Limited will charge the full cost of service where clients are receiving or have received compensation payments intended to cover the full cost of care. ALARA liaise closely with the client or their representative regarding the cost of services in compensation cases.

ALARA QLD Limited will charge the full cost of service delivery in relation to clients wishing to purchasing services privately or another funding source. Individuals may purchase additional services at the full rate which are outside the scope of the Queensland Community Support Scheme.

Pension Status

Clients do not need an income assessment to access QCSS services.

Partnered Clients

Client contribution arrangements only apply to QCSS clients. This is particularly relevant where services are provided to partnered clients. Where both individuals are QCSS clients they 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).

Hardship

In accordance with the responsibilities outlined in the Service Agreement between ALARA and the client, clients have a responsibility to pay the fee specified in their service agreement or negotiate an alternative arrangement with ALARA if their circumstances change.

Where a client is unable to pay because of financial hardship they can request a review of their co-contribution amount. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is the point of approval for all applications for fee reduction.

Clients may make an application for fee reduction on the basis of financial hardship through their Coordinator/Facilitator. The application must include reasons and supporting evidence of financial hardship with the request.

In order to evidence the request Coordinators/Facilitators may ask for information about your financial resources and commitments including sources of income and expenses and whether the client has a responsibility to support another person. Coordinators/Facilitators will collect this information on a *QCSS Hardship Request Form*.

Fees will be reduced for a period of time where the client has significant additional essential costs which affect their capacity to the prescribed contribution fee e.g. medication, special food, specialist medical services or equipment.

Where a client's fees are reduced by approval of the Executive Manager this decision will include a period of applicability. Fee reductions will be reviewed on a three monthly basis unless the circumstances are unlikely to change in the foreseeable future. The reduced fee (and time frame) will be reflected in a revised Service Agreement.

Fee relief is not available for individuals paying full fee for service.

Clients and/or their carers/advocates have the right to appeal against a given fee determination via the ALARA Complaints Management and Resolutions Process. Coordinators have responsibility to ensure that the client or their representative is fully informed on their right to appeal.

ALARA is not able to subsidise unfunded personal expenses (e.g. kilometres above the level covered through grant arrangements, out of pocket expenses) except where another source of revenue is identified (e.g. sponsorship or service level fundraising).

Fees Payable on Cancellation of Rostered Service

Where a QCSS client cancels an individual service with less than 24 hours' notice, the client/ family will be charged the co-contribution for one hour of service at the applicable hourly rate. Where less than 24 hours notice is given and the support worker is on the way to or arrives at the support the full co-contribution will be charged to the individual.

If the service is cancelled due to an exceptional and unforeseen circumstance (same day or preceding day) e.g. emergency hospitalization of the client or carer a request can be made to the Chief Executive Officer to waive the fee.

Invoicing and Methods of Payment

Clients will be invoiced for services received during that month. Payment is required within 30 days. Direct Debit is the preferred method of payment.

Payment can be made in cash/cheque directly to ALARA at any Centre or by prior agreement directly to the support worker who will issue a receipt.

Accounts can also be paid by EFT, debit/credit card or Centrepay deductions.

Refusal to Pay

A refusal to pay for services (where hardship cannot be established is inconsistent with the *QCSS Client Rights and Responsibilities* that form part of the terms and conditions of the Service Agreement. ALARA will work with individuals (or their financial delegate) to develop a payment plan.

Reporting

Grant agreements include a requirement for ALARA to report a dollar amount collected from client contributions. The amount of fees collected is reported to the funding body as part of the grant acquittal process and provision of financial statements.

6.0 Quality Standards:

Human Service Quality Standards:

- Standard 1. – Governance and Management
- Standard 2. – Service Access
- Standard 3. – Responding to Individual Need
- Standard 5 – Feedback, Complaints and Appeals

7.0 Reference documents:

- QCSS Practice Manual
- National Guide to the Client Contribution Framework

8.0 Related Policies and Procedures

- Policy – Complaints Management and Resolutions
- Policy – Confidentiality
- Policy – Privacy
- Policy - Provision of Access and Equity for People from Diverse Ethnic, Linguistic and Cultural Backgrounds
- Policy – User Pays Service Fees
- Procedure – Concerns (Complaints Stage 1)
- Procedure – Complaints Stage 2-4
- Procedure – Privacy
- Fact Sheet – Client Rights and Responsibilities
- Form - QCSS Service Agreement
- Form – QCSS Hardship Request
- QCSS Schedule of Fees (Co-contributions for the Queensland Community Support Scheme)



Chief Executive Officer
ALARA QLD Limited.

1st July 2022

Date: