POLICY – QCSS FEES AND CONTRIBUTIONS

1.0 Overview:

The QCSS program guidelines stipulate that people in receipt of QCSS supports should contribute, where possible, to the cost of their support through fees.

2.0 Principles:

The following outlines the fee principles that ALARA QLD Limited (ALARA) is required to adhere to, to ensure a fair and equitable approach to people who access QCSS supports:

Number	Principle
1	Fees should be charged to all people who are assessed as having capacity to pay. This should be done in accordance with a scale of fees appropriate to the person's level of income, amount of supports they use and any changes in circumstances.
2	Inability to pay cannot be used as a basis for refusing a service to people who are assessed as requiring supports.
3	Organisations should charge the full cost of the supports where a person has received or is receiving compensation payments intended to cover the cost of community support.
4	People with similar levels of income and service usage patterns should be charged equivalent fees for equivalent supports.
5	Solicited donations for supports should be considered to be equivalent to fees and are subject to all provisions of this policy.
6	Fees charged should not exceed the actual cost of delivering the support.
7	Fees should not be charged for time taken in support planning and plan reviews.
8	Fee collection should be administered efficiently and the cost of administration of fees should be less than the income received from fees.
9	The revenue from fees must be used to enhance and/or expand QCSS supports to eligible people.
10	Organisations should clearly document and make publicly available their procedures for determining fees, including the assessment criteria.
11	The procedures to determine and collect fees should take into account the situation of special needs groups.
12	Assessing a person's capacity to pay fees should be as simple and unobtrusive as possible, with any information obtained treated confidentially.
13	People and their advocates have the right of appeal against a given fee determination.

Fee Levels
(Principles 1, 3, and 4)

The Schedule of Fees (available on the ALARA website) outlines the upper limits that can be charged for a quantity of service. ALARA uses an equitable and consistent approach in determining the co-contribution payable charging the same fees for the same supports, and the same fees for service users in similar financial and service need circumstances.

Waiver of Fees
(Principle 2)

ALARA will reduce or waive the co-contribution for support hours where the service user is assessed as not having the capacity to pay the full fee applying to their circumstances. For example, waiving of fees may be appropriate where the service user has very high medical or pharmaceutical costs that take up a large proportion of income, or if a service user is forced to pay a high proportion of income on rent.

Administration of Collection of Fees
(Principle 8)

ALARA has established efficient and transparent administrative procedures for the collection of fees. These approaches will need to address the issue of fees collection from high/multiple service users.

Use of Fee Revenue
(Principle 9)

All income collected through fees is to be used to expand and/or enhance QCSS supports.

Transparency of User Charging Arrangements
(Principle 10)

ALARA has developed this policy outlining the use of fees revenue, the fees (co-contributions) to be charged for any supports provided and payment procedures. This is provided to all QCSS clients and is also available on the ALARA website. All clients are advised of the fees applicable to them at the time of commencement of supports.

Assessment of Capacity to Pay
(Principle 12)

In accordance with this Policy, ALARA obtains from clients the information required to assess their capacity to pay. The information is not be shared or used for any other purposes is stored securely in their Client File to ensure confidentiality.

The assessment of the capacity to pay is only undertaken in respect of the person who benefits from the support delivered.

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
Reviewed:	May 2024

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. 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 a formal 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 CEO 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/Facilitators 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.

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

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

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)

Jan Dickson

Chief Executive Officer
ALARA QLD Limited.

27 May 2024
Date: