

POLICY

Macedon Ranges Shire Council's Community Support Unit is committed to supporting the following principles within the Commonwealth Home Support Programme Client Contribution Framework (as cited in CHSP Programme Manual 2020-2022).

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 from client contributions.
5. **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.
6. **Sustainability:** Revenue from client contributions should be used to support ongoing service delivery and expand the services providers are currently funded to deliver.

Macedon Ranges Shire Council recognises its legislative and contractual obligations in relation to implementing and reporting of client contributions for services delivered, including the CHSP, and of such relevant grant agreements that may become available in the future.

In determining the structure for Client Contribution a tiered approach will be utilised to take into account income status and eligibility for grant subsidy. During the service entry process the Income Declaration Form will be utilised to assess income status and subsequent fee to be charged.

An annual Financial Declaration is collected from all clients. The declaration is referenced against thresholds set by the Australian Government Department of Human Services to determine if a client's ability to pay is Low, Medium or High.

The Declaration is to be signed by the client and updated on an annual basis at the time of service review. People with similar levels of income, service usage patterns and eligibility will be charged equivalent for services. The client is to advise of any change to their financial status prior to the review if required.

The schedule of fees will be based on criteria including (but not exclusive to) the actual cost of service, nature of service, consistency with comparable councils and indexation rates.

Client Contributions will be reviewed in accordance with the Macedon Ranges Shire Council Schedule of Fees and Charges review process and be considered part of the schedule. Clients will be informed of any changes through written correspondence at least one month before changes are implemented.

Information regarding the Client Contribution Schedule and this Policy will be readily available via the Macedon Ranges Shire Council website. Costs relating to services will be explained upon initial contact with the person requesting a service.

Persons requesting a service will be asked whether the contribution will pose a difficulty for them. Inability to pay will not exclude clients from receiving a service. When necessary services will be prioritised to those in greatest need, with consideration of comparative need for a service and not on the individual's capacity to pay.

Council's Financial Hardship Policy will apply to those suffering financial hardship or who would suffer financial hardship if they paid the full charges for which they are liable.

When a CHSP client is not paying the required fee, a review or reassessment of the client's capacity to pay must occur. At this time, as per Council's Debt Management Policy, payment plan options will be put in place in the first instance.

Fee reductions and fee waivers will be considered on a case by case basis as a last option and in full consultation with the person requesting the services and/or the preferred advocate. All requests for fee deferrals and waivers will be assessed by the Manager of Finance as per Council's Financial Hardship policy.

Macedon Ranges Shire Council will ensure efficient and effective administrative integrity of the implementation of the Client Contribution Framework.

People receiving services will be encouraged to contact the Community Support Unit at any time if they are experiencing difficulties with meeting the costs of services or are dissatisfied with Client Contribution arrangements. People receiving services and/or their advocates have the right to utilise the Macedon Ranges Shire Council Complaints process to appeal against a given Client Contribution arrangement.