

Larrakia Nation Aged Care Fees Policy

1. Preamble

1.1. Support provided by organisations funded through the Commonwealth Department of Health's Aged Care Program, such as Larrakia Aged Care (LAC) must adhere to the national Aged Care Fees Policy principles. These policies and principles seek a contribution from clients towards the cost of the home care they receive, at a level that is fair and affordable, but sufficiently flexible to adapt to individual circumstances.

2. Principles

2.1. In charging fees, Larrakia Aged Care (LAC) applies the following principles:


- All clients, regardless of ethnicity, language group or family connections, are required to contribute to the cost of providing a full level of support to them.
- Clients who do not have the capacity to pay can apply to have their fee reduced in accordance with the Fee Reduction Guidelines below.
- No client will be refused a basic level of care because of an inability to pay fees.
- Fees for support are all-inclusive and cover all materials used in the delivery of the support, unless otherwise stated.
- Fees will not exceed the actual unit costs of service provision.
- Revenue from client fees will be used for the provision of care to clients of Larrakia Aged Care.

3. Changes to fees can be phased in in increments where there is a large jump in fees.

4. Aged Care Standard Fees

4.1. LAC requires clients to contribute to the cost of their care through the payment of fees. These fees are set at standard rates, and are listed in the Larrakia Aged Care Brochure, online at www.larrakia.com and are displayed at the Larrakia Aged Care Centre. A copy of the Brochure is attached in Appendix A.

4.2. Fees are based on a flat rate per fortnight at each level of service, with the number of hours of care commensurate with the service level, taking account of the particular circumstances of the client. Meals on Wheels (MoW) are additional and charged at a flat rate per client.

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- 4.3. LAC reserves the right to vary the standard fees from time to time, based on the affordability of the fees to LAC clients and the costs of care provision to clients. Clients will be given reasonable notice of any changes to the Fees Schedule.
- 4.4. All clients are informed of the Fees Policy and the Standard Fees in discussions about their support plan and prior to service delivery. A copy of the Standard Fees Brochure and Fees Policy is to be provided to them. Clients will be notified in writing of any changes in fees at least 14 days prior to the change.
- 4.5. Clients can request an explanation of the fees structure and policy in a language of their choice.

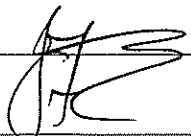
5. Payment of Fees

- 5.1. Centrepay deduction is the preferred method of payment. Staff will assist clients to fill in forms and undertake Income Management interviews where necessary in order for clients to make payments. Ordinarily, clients will fill in these forms on sign-up, where there is a change in fee levels, or where they have cancelled their Centrepay deduction.
- 5.2. Centrepay forms should include information on the level of care and whether MoW is included to assist in the fees reconciliation.
- 5.3. Depending on the circumstances, a number of other fee payment options may be considered including direct debit, cheque, electronic funds transfer (EFT) and cash payments to Larrakia Nation administration office if necessary.

6. Suspension of Care

- 6.1. Payment of fees can be suspended whilst clients are away and not receiving care, either out of town or in care such as at hospital. In this case, Centrelink can be contacted to suspend payments.
- 6.2. Clients or their carers should make their best effort to inform LAC if they are going to go away. Where clients or their carers have not informed LAC and it is believed that they had the opportunity to do so, LAC may not repay the full amount of fees paid without care provision.
- 6.3. Clients who have been away and have continued to pay fees have the option of having the fees refunded to them or have goods purchased on their behalf to the value of the care not received.
- 6.4. Where clients have cancelled and not suspended their fee payments, staff should ensure that payments are re-started prior to re-starting a standard level of care provision.

7. Non-Accrual of Debt by Clients

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7.1. Unpaid client fee debts are not accrued by the client. This policy does not provide for continued high levels of care to clients with unpaid fees and therefore there is no need for debts to be accrued. Instead, clients will receive a reduced level of care as described below.

8. Non-payment of fees and access to a basic level of care

8.1. Clients who do not pay fees receive only a basic level of care.

8.2. A basic level of care is defined as:

One to two hours a week for HACC clients and one to three hours a week for CACP clients. A basic level of care only consists of assistance with essential support related to personal health and hygiene, accessing essential services such as health care, and participation in some group activities. Meals are limited to three per week.

8.3. Clients which receive the basic rather than standard levels of care will be notified in writing that this is the case.

8.4. Clients are eligible for standard levels of care whilst their application for fee reduction is being considered.

8.5. If a client is identified as not paying fees or paying a reduced level of fee, the client will immediately be notified in writing that there is an underpayment, and will be requested in writing to return to the standard fees within 14 days, or else apply for a fee reduction as detailed in section 11. At the end of the 14 days, clients will be provided the basic level of care, unless an application for fee reduction is made.


section 10 →

8.6. All reasonable attempts to negotiate with the client should be made regarding fees. The client should be made aware of their right to appeal and use the services of an advocate or translator.

9. Fees Reconciliation

9.1. It is the role of Aged Care management to monitor payments to Larrakia Nation by LAC clients to ensure they are consistent with the fees policy and at the proper level, based on notifications from Centrelink.

9.2. Aged Care management will maintain a spreadsheet, database, or other record to compare clients fees for which they are eligible with the actual payments received as notified by Centrelink. This should be updated on a fortnightly basis or as notifications from Centrelink are received.

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- 9.3. Aged Care management should also liaise with Larrakia Nation's finance department where there are other forms of payment by clients, to ensure clients not paying via Centrelink are also contributing the proper amount to their care.
- 9.4. Where an overpayment is identified through the fees reconciliation process or through notification from Centrelink, clients have the option of having their fees refunded to them, have goods purchased on their behalf or be provided with additional services from LNAC Aged Care Services to the value of the care not received.
- 9.5. Overpayments should be returned to clients as soon as is practicable.
- 9.6. Where an underpayment is identified, the proper procedure will be followed as detailed in section 9.

10. Fee Reduction Guidelines

- 10.1. Clients have the right to apply for an on-going fee reduction. Applicants can provide a verbal, recorded or written statement in support of their application. Applicants also have the right to deliver their application in a language of their choice. The application for a fee reduction should include responses to the assessment criteria below in paragraph 11.6.
- 10.2. Clients can request a 25%, 50% or 75% on-going fee reduction.
- 10.3. The assessment of the fee reduction is made by a committee of three people chosen by the CEO. Ordinarily, this will be the General Manager, the Aged Care Manager, and an Aged Care Worker with knowledge of the client.
- 10.4. This assessment committee will recommend to the CEO whether a fee reduction should be granted and at what level.
- 10.5. The assessment committee has the right to request further information from the applicant.
- 10.6. Approval of a reduced fee is at the discretion of the Larrakia Nation CEO.
- 10.7. The assessment criteria for recommendation of a reduced fee is as follows:
- The total income from the applicant, including pension, superannuation, income from other assets such as property and shares, and royalty payments.
 - The level of family and community support received by the applicant.
 - The lifestyle, behaviour and condition of other family members, including partners and carer(s), whether working or not, and whether the applicant is themselves a *de facto* carer for other family members.
 - Whether they have secure housing, level of rental payments and the number of people sharing a house with the applicant.
 - Outstanding debts owed by the applicant.

- Distance from essential services including public transport.

10.8. Clients can also apply for a temporary reduction in fees due to unforeseen personal circumstances, such as a funeral, the need to replace white goods or other capital purchases, or essential travel. In this case, clients need to state the circumstances and state how long they would like the temporary reduction to apply.

10.9. Approval of a temporary reduction in fees is assessed by and granted at the discretion of the Aged Care Manager.

11. Appeals

11.1. Clients, or their advocates, have the right of appeal if they are unhappy with any aspect of fee reduction assessment or fee setting processes. All clients shall be advised of this right and the process of appeal at the time of assessment and subsequent reviews.

11.2. The process for appeal is as follows:

11.2.1. The client contacts LAC about their concerns.

11.2.2. LAC acknowledges the approach in writing within seven working days and arranges to meet with the client to discuss the situation.

11.2.3. LAC ensures that:


- The client is appropriately supported or represented by a carer, guardian or advocate.
- The correct fees have been set for the client's current circumstances.
- Fee reduction avenues have been explored.
- The client correctly understands the fee outcome.

11.3. A client who appeals the level of fees charged will receive a written statement of the outcome of their appeal within 7 working days of a decision being made and advised about any further steps they may take.

11.4. Contact details of independent advocacy services (Appendix B), which may be available to negotiate the payment of fees on the client's behalf, will also be provided.

11.5. No client will be disadvantaged or penalised as a result of lodging an appeal.


11.6. If appropriate, the service provider will negotiate with the client to reduce the disputed fee while the appeal is being considered.

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Attachments

Appendix A: Larrakia Aged Care Brochure, including standard fees

Appendix B: List of Independent Advocacy Services.

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