

## **POLICY STATEMENT 11**

### **PAYMENT FOR CONSUMER AND CARER PARTICIPATION.**

#### **Background**

The history of payment for consumer and carer participation varies across programs in the health sector and within the mental health sector. The importance of consumer and carer participation in decision-making processes is now generally accepted within public mental health services and increasingly within private mental health services. Consumers and carers can add value to the quality of care and services received and ensure positive changes within private mental health services.

Lived Experience Australia endorses the approach to encouraging and remunerating consumer and carer participation set out in the National Mental health Commission's *Paid Participation Policy for people with a lived experience of mental health difficulties, their families and support people*, and the National Mental health Consumer Carer Forum's *Consumer and Carer Participation Policy*. This policy seeks to add to these documents by addressing the particular issues that are applicable to private mental health services.

#### **Consumer and carer participation in private mental health services**

Consumers and carers want the opportunity to participate in a variety of private mental health situations. For some it may mean being able to have a say in the management of their illness - this is seen as 'good practice' and is not the subject of these principles. For others it means being active in a number of activities at the service provision level. In these cases it is fundamentally important to bear in mind that consumer and carer participation is planned and budgeted for.

Examples of current types of participation may include the following.

- Consumer and Carer Advisory Committee or as a Consumer – Carer Consultant
- Membership of important key committees
- Staff selection
- Policy and service development committees
- Quality improvement committees
- Consumer or carer information sessions
- Focus groups
- Other activities

Currently a variety of mechanisms exist for remuneration for the above participation. These include:

- No payment at all,
- Reimbursement of expenses only;
- Payment on an hourly/sessional basis at rates agreed upon;
- Payment according to rates established by the Australian Government Remuneration Tribunal.

### **Guidelines for funding consumer and carer participation in private mental health services**

Remuneration rates need to acknowledge the skill of consumer and carer participants and the contribution they make to improved services, as well as the time required to prepare for and attend meetings/consultations. However, rates also need to be set at a level that recognises the particular circumstances of private mental health services.

A starting point for consideration are the Australian Government rates set by the Commonwealth Remuneration Tribunal or reimbursement of consumer and carer participation.

Lived Experience Australia recommends that private mental health services follow the above rates where possible. However, as a minimum, consumers and carers should not be out of pocket for their participation. In cases where sitting fees cannot be paid, expenses should at least be reimbursed. This could be negotiated reimbursements for petrol for members travelling long distances to attend meetings, parking, bus fares, costs associated with taxis etc. Account of the financial costs associated with printing Agendas and documents in preparation for the meetings is also required.

The following principles are suggested by Lived Experience Australia to cover the variety of situations that may arise in private mental health services.

#### **Sitting Fee:**

##### *Casual Rates*

Examples of this would include the following situations:

- Staff selection committee
- Other committees convened for a one off purpose

#### ***Plus travel expenses is recommended***

##### *For members of Ongoing Committees*

Examples of this would include the following situations.

- Consumer and Carer Advisory Committee;
- Membership of important committees within the private hospital;
- Staff selection committee;
- Policy and service development committees;

- Quality improvement committees;
- Running of focus groups
- Other activities.

***Plus travel expenses is recommended***

Note: An additional amount should be negotiated for the chairperson in recognition of the extra work involved.

Reimbursement for costs associated with printing Agendas and papers for the meeting must be taken into account **or** meeting papers must be provided in hard copy and posted prior to the meeting date.

**Policy**

1. Consumer and Carer expertise should be acknowledged with appropriate remuneration, as set out above.
2. Consumers and carers 'lived experience' and diversity of expertise is equally recognised.
3. Consumers and carers **must not** be out of pocket as a result of their participation and reimbursed for approved expenses.
4. A review of the rate of reimbursement is undertaken annually taking into consideration the CPI.

***Policy approved: April, 2014***