



Advisory Council Participation Payments, Reimbursement of Expenses and Support Policy

1. BACKGROUND

In the WA Country Health Service (WACHS), we value our long established and important partnerships with our Advisory Councils and the time and commitment volunteered by their consumer, carer, and community members to health service improvement.

We recognise that travel and other costs can sometimes be a barrier to community and consumer participation in WACHS engagement and improvement activities, and are committed to providing appropriate support to Advisory Council members to ensure they are able to fulfil their role in providing their expertise and perspective.

WACHS also has a responsibility to provide orientation, training, support, safe environments, insurance cover and payment for consumers and community representatives as outlined in the [WA Health Volunteer Policy, April 2009](#).

2. POLICY STATEMENT

This policy applies only to formally appointed community, consumer, and carer members of WACHS District Health Advisory Councils (DHACs), and the WACHS Wheatbelt and Great Southern Aboriginal Health Advisory Councils (known herein as Advisory Council consumer members).

Advisory Council consumer members are offered the following:

- a participation payment at Health Consumers' Council recommended rates for participation at approved meetings, and
- reimbursement of pre-approved travel expenses (not including travel time), accommodation, meals and other out-of-pocket expenses (including printing costs) up to Public Service Award rates, and Australian Taxation Office travel cost reimbursement rates that are reasonably and necessarily incurred to attend meetings or to deal with official, approved business.

Advisory Council consumer members have the right to accept or refuse payment and reimbursement for their participation.

3. SCOPE

This policy **does not** apply to Advisory Council health service/agency representatives or members of other WACHS advisory council or committees.

This policy is to be applied and followed by all WACHS staff who are involved in the management of meetings and activities which engage the services of DHACs, or the Wheatbelt and Great Southern Aboriginal Health Advisory Councils.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Reimbursement

Appointed Advisory Council consumer members initiate payment claims for **approved** consumer participation and travel costs by way of the reimbursement process.

The Advisory Council's health service secretariat/support staff are responsible for ensuring that the consumer member is reimbursed appropriately and efficiently.

Exemptions

Where health service staff would like to provide reimbursement which differs from this policy, a written exemption is to be sought from the Regional Director or Executive Director. Careful consideration is to be given to any payment not compliant with the policy, and the impact of setting precedents.

Reporting

Annual reporting to WACHS Central Office of participation payments provided to District Health Advisory Council consumer members is the responsibility of the local health service/region (see further details in Section 7, Evaluation).

5. SUPPORT AND SAFETY

For the purpose of this policy, Advisory Council consumer members are considered volunteers as per the WA Health Volunteer Policy, April 2009, and are entitled to a safe working environment.

Each WACHS region is to provide a safe working environment for its Advisory Councils, and relevant safety and emergency procedure information during orientation.

WACHS is responsible for providing personal accident cover for volunteers as per the guidelines of the RiskCover WA Insurance Policy.

In accordance with the WA Health Criminal Record Screening Policy, all prospective WA Health volunteers must undergo an Australia-wide criminal record check and return a satisfactory result before commencing volunteer duties. The criminal record check is mandatory for all volunteers. Please refer to related WACHS [Volunteers Procedure](#) and supporting flowcharts and forms.

6. PAYMENT AND REIMBURSEMENT PROCESS

Participation Payments are to be made in line with the [Health Consumers' Council of WA, Consumer Representative Payment Policy](#).

Pre-approval of expenses must be sought from the Regional Director or relevant authorising officer **prior to** the expenses being incurred. Payment or reimbursement are not to be processed until evidence of attendance and/or expense is provided (i.e. meeting minutes, travel receipts etc.).

Staff providing administrative/secretariat support to the Advisory Council are to complete the relevant HCN e-form:

- [AP3 Consumer Participation Payment Request Form](#) or
- [AP6 Consumer Participation Payment Request Form \(Kilometre\)](#) (based on current rates as advised by the [Australian Taxation Office 'Claiming A Deduction for Car Expenses](#)).

Staff are to ensure that payment authority is sought before submitting the form to HCN for processing and ensure that the forms are progressed in a timely manner, **or** follow their region's finance processes for consumer participation payment and reimbursement.

7. DEFINITIONS

Advisory Council	For the purposes of this policy, the term Advisory Council applies only to the WACHS District Health Advisory Councils (DHACs), and the WACHS Wheatbelt and Great Southern Aboriginal Health Advisory Councils.
Advisory Council consumer member	<p>An Advisory Council member who voices the consumer, carer and/or community perspective and takes part in the decision making process on behalf of consumers, and is expected to bring a consumer perspective to matters under consideration. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protecting the interests of consumers • presenting how consumers may feel and think about certain issues • contributing the consumer experience • acting as a watchdog on issues affecting consumers • providing information about any relevant issues affecting consumers, and • being an active member of a WACHS Advisory Council as defined in this policy. <p>Further general information and resources, see the Health Consumers Council website.</p>
Meeting	An activity where a person is formally engaged by WACHS in their capacity as an Advisory Council Consumer or Community representative. Examples include, but are not limited to, Advisory Council meetings, health service selection panels, inductions, other WACHS committee meetings (such as safety and quality committees). Attendance at such meetings may be in person, via video-conference, or phone.
Participation Payment	Payment made to an advisory council member in recognition of their time and expertise provided during an approved meeting.

<p>Travel Expenses</p>	<p>Reimbursement to cover the cost of travel i.e. public transport fees or, if the consumer member uses their car to travel to an approved meeting they may claim reimbursement per kilometre as per the Australian Taxation Office 'Claiming A Deduction for Car Expenses.</p> <p>Reimbursement of travel expenses does not include payment for travel time.</p>
<p>Volunteer</p>	<p>As defined by the WA Health Volunteer Policy, an individual who chooses of their own free will to engage in specified, unpaid activities within WACHS for the mutual benefit of the community, themselves and the health services. This includes advisory council members who may receive payment for out of pocket expenses and participation.</p>

8. REPORTING and EVALUATION

Mandatory Financial Reporting

WACHS Regions, together with the local health services responsible for the WACHS District Health Advisory Councils (DHACs), must keep a record of any **participation payments** made to their DHAC members each financial year, including:

- DHAC consumer member names
- position of each member (i.e. Chair, Deputy Chair, or member)
- appointment period of each member
- gross actual total participation payment made to each member per financial year.

This information must be readily accessible and made available to WACHS Area Office upon request in June each year to provide to the Department of Health (DoH) as part of the DoH annual reporting process and to meet the Government Boards and Committees Register reporting requirements.

An excel spreadsheet template is available on the WACHS DHAC intranet page for regions to use for reporting purposes.

Evaluation

Records of DHAC meetings and activities should also be kept (including DHAC Annual Summary Reports – see the WACHS [DHAC Guideline](#)) for health services to evaluate consumer engagement levels and outcomes achieved via the DHACs.

9. REFERENCES

Department of Health [Operational Directive OD 0183/09 The WA Health Volunteer Policy, April 2009](#)

WACHS [Volunteer Procedure](#)

Health Consumer's Council of WA [Consumer Representative Payments Policy](#)
[Australian Taxation Office 'Claiming A Deduction for Car Expenses'](#)

[Public Service Award 1992](#)

[Premier's Circular \(2006\) No. 2006/01 Reimbursement of Travel Expenses for Members of Government Boards and Committees](#)

[WA Health Consumer Carer and Community Engagement Framework, April 2007](#)

[Public Sector Commissioner's Circular 2009-16 – Guidelines for Successful Partnerships between Public Sector Agencies and Volunteers](#)

[Personal Accident Cover, RiskCover WA](#)

Department of Health [Operational Directive OD 0275/10 Criminal Record Screening Policy and Guidelines](#)

WACHS [District Health Advisory Council Guideline](#)

WACHS [DHAC Resources, Strategic documents and applications](#)

WACHS [Partnering with Consumers Guideline](#)

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