

Consumer, carer and community member remuneration

Summary This Guideline sets out NSW Health's commitment to remuneration and reimbursement of consumers, carers and community members for their time and contributions to agreed engagement activities. It provides guidance on circumstances where payments will be made, the rates of payment and the methods of payment.

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Author branch Patient Experience

Branch contact (02) 9391 9000

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Consumer, carer and community member remuneration

GUIDELINE SUMMARY

NSW Health places a strong emphasis on listening to and collaborating with consumers, carers and community members to improve the quality and safety of the health system.

This Guideline sets out NSW Health's commitment to remuneration and reimbursement of consumers, carers and community members for their time and contributions to agreed engagement activities. It provides clear and equitable guidance about the circumstances where payments will be made, the rates of payment and the methods of payment.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Consumers, carers and community members bring unique perspectives and experiences that can help to identify areas for improvement and inform the development of better policies, programs, and services. These individuals are often invited to participate in activities or projects because they can help NSW Health organisations meet their quality and safety objectives.

NSW Health recognises that time commitments and other costs can be a barrier to community and consumer participation. Remuneration aims to make it easier for people to contribute to engagement and improvement activities. Payment also aims to increase the diversity of people who choose to engage with NSW Health organisations.

No consumer, carer or community member should be out of pocket for contributing to improvement of the health system. Individuals should be reimbursed for reasonable expenses related to their participation in engagement activities.

Consumers, carers and community members contribute time, knowledge, skills, expertise, and first-hand experiences to help guide the planning, design, delivery and evaluation of systems and services. Remuneration recognises the valuable contributions made by people who use our health services, or people living in our community.

REVISION HISTORY

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1. BACKGROUND

Partnering with consumers, carers and communities is fundamental to achieving NSW Health’s vision of a healthcare system that delivers outcomes that matter. Through effective engagement, consumers, carers and community members can draw on their expertise and experience to help shape, improve and evaluate NSW Health services. By partnering, we aim to deliver a human-centred health service that achieves the best possible outcomes for patients, carers and the communities.

This Guideline is consistent with the principles of the NSW Health program [Elevating the Human Experience](#), aimed at improving the health experiences of patients, their families, carers and NSW Health staff. It is aligned and supports the adoption of the NSW Health guide, *All of us: engaging consumers, carers and communities across NSW Health*.

This Guideline supports the delivery of NSW Health’s [Future Health](#) roadmap, in particular Strategic Objective 1.4 – *Partner with consumers in co-design and implementation of models of care*.

1.1. About this document

This Guideline outlines recommended practices in relation to remuneration and reimbursement of consumers, carers and community members.

NSW Health aims to empower equitable, meaningful, and effective approaches to partnering with consumers, carers and community members.

A core principle of *All of us: engaging consumers, carers and community across NSW Health* is offering recognition. NSW Health offers financial and non-financial recognition. Payment processes are accessible, prompt and fair. No consumer, carer or community member should be out of pocket for contributing to improvement of the health system. Individuals should be remunerated whenever they are eligible for approved activities, which should be consistent and equitable across NSW Health organisations.

1.2. Key definitions

Activity	The activity or project undertaken which is intended to meet the objectives of the NSW Health organisation.
Carer	<p>A person who provides care and support to a family member, friend or as part of a kinship system. Many engagements involve work with carers and consumers.</p> <p>The term ‘consumer’ is not interchangeable with carer. This excludes people providing that care under contract of services, as part of training or education, or doing voluntary work for a charitable organisation.</p>

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<p>Community member</p>	<p>An individual from a group of people with common characteristics such as culture, language, religion, beliefs, geographic location or gender. Individuals may identify with more than one community and may represent various interests.</p> <p>We use communities in this Guideline to acknowledge the diversity of communities and that there is no one ‘community.’</p>
<p>Consumer</p>	<p>People who use, have used, or are potential users of health services. While some consumers have formal roles, others do not and may not want to.</p> <p>All perspectives are valuable, and no one can represent all consumer perspectives. Different people and services might use terms such as: patients, clients, users, service users and residents. In this guide, consumer includes these definitions.</p>
<p>Lived expertise</p>	<p>Knowledge, insights, understanding and wisdom gathered through lived experience.</p>
<p>NSW Health organisation</p>	<p>For the purposes of this Guideline, "NSW Health organisation" refers to all NSW Health hospitals, health services, pillars and specialty health networks.</p>
<p>Reimbursement</p>	<p>To repay or compensate a person for any reasonable money spent because of, or to enable their participation in, approved NSW Health activities.</p>
<p>Remuneration</p>	<p>Payment for time and contributions to approved NSW Health activities.</p>
<p>Volunteer</p>	<p>A person who freely and willingly offers their time to assist a NSW Health organisation in the provision of care or services without any financial or material compensation and whose roles and responsibilities differ from that of consumers, carers and community members.</p> <p>For the purposes of this Guideline, an individual who waives their entitlement to remuneration for which they are eligible is not a volunteer; as their roles and responsibilities defined in their engagement do not change despite their choosing to waive remuneration.</p>

1.3. National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards

This Guideline aligns with the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards for the Partnering with Consumers Standard. The Standard aims to create health service organisations in which there are mutually beneficial outcomes by having consumers as partners in planning, design, delivery, measurement and evaluation of systems and services.

2. ENGAGING CONSUMERS, CARERS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

2.1. Basis for engagement

A consumer, carer or community member can be engaged on a paid or voluntary basis. All materials used to promote the opportunity must clearly state whether the engagement will be remunerated or voluntary.

Remuneration for consumers, carers and community members can only be approved by a NSW Health staff member with an appropriate level of delegation.

Consumers, carers and community members should not be engaged to undertake work outside the scope of their engagement, such as work which would be expected to be undertaken by an employee of NSW Health.

2.2. Availability

Consumers, carers and community members are responsible for securing any leave or release from employment, as required to participate in the NSW Health activity.

NSW Health is not responsible for any loss of income by consumers, carers and community members for participating in NSW Health activities.

2.3. Onboarding

NSW Health organisations must identify which checks or types of clearance are required for the engagement. This may include National Police Checks and Working with Children Checks in accordance with the NSW Health Policy Directive *Working with Children Checks and Other Police Checks* ([PD2019_003](#)).

Consumers, carers and community members must abide by the NSW Health Policy Directive *NSW Health Code of Conduct* ([PD2015_049](#)) and all other relevant NSW Health policies.

To support effective participation in NSW Health activities, individuals are to be provided with a nominated contact for the activity and receive relevant information and documents such as terms of reference ahead of participation.

3. REMUNERATION

3.1. Eligibility for remuneration

Remuneration is provided in the context of a constrained resource environment and as such, may not be available for all activities.

Individuals will only be paid for activities which they have been requested or approved to participate in by a NSW Health organisation.

People who are eligible for remuneration as consumers, carers and community members include:

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- Any individual who meets the definition of consumer, carer or community member (as defined in [Section 1.2](#)) and is not already receiving payment for their participation in the activity from a NSW Health organisation or by another organisation
- Individuals who are employed by NSW Health but are engaging in the NSW Health activity as a consumer, carer or community member in their own time, independent of their professional role.

People not eligible for remuneration

People who are not eligible for remuneration as consumers, carers and community members include:

- Consumers, carers and community members who are funded by another organisation to participate in the NSW Health activity
- Employees, contractors or consultants of NSW Health who are already being remunerated for their participation in the activity by NSW Health
- A consumer, carer or community member who attends an event, seminar or conference as a matter of personal choice or interest and not at the request of the NSW Health organisation.

Activities eligible for remuneration

Participation and contributions made by consumers, carers and community members to NSW Health activities must be requested by the NSW Health organisation to be eligible for remuneration. Activities must also be time-limited with clearly defined deliverables for a specific purpose.

Examples of NSW Health activities that are eligible include:

- Engagement in activities, programs, lectures, conferences, seminars, focus groups and events at the request of a NSW Health organisation
- Membership and participation on NSW Health consumer advisory councils, accreditation committees, Partnering with Consumer Representatives committees, health councils, clinical councils, infection prevention service, facility redevelopment programs, Quality and Safety Committees, Critical Incident Review panels, etc
- Membership on NSW Health committees providing strategic direction to projects, programs or organisations
- Participation in a workshop to develop a new policy, guideline, strategic plan or resource
- Review of policies, guidelines, patient-facing materials and other NSW Health publications
- Research committee membership, providing advice from the consumer, carer or community perspective on research (as opposed to being research subjects)
- Participation in service design, redesign or improvement

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- Training or development activities undertaken by the individual for their participation in activities at the request of a NSW Health organisation
 - Presentations at an event or forum at the request of a NSW Health organisation
 - Presentations at staff training and/or orientation
 - Participation in selection committee panels for staff or for consumer interviews
 - Participation in time-limited working groups for a clearly defined deliverable, for example, to produce communications appropriate to the local community
 - Participation in promotional activities at the request of the health service, such as involvement in video recordings, developing marketing collateral, providing the consumer story at organisational events.

Unless otherwise stated, teleconference and videoconference are acceptable modes of participation.

Activities not eligible for remuneration

Activities undertaken by consumers, carers and community members that are not eligible for remuneration include:

- Any ad-hoc discussions or conversations between the individual and NSW Health staff
- Open invitations to attend seminars, lectures, conferences forums or other activities where the individual was not requested to attend and/or participate on behalf of the NSW Health organisation
- Any activity the individual has participated in without either the request by, or approval from, a NSW Health organisation
- Surveys and other collections of consumer and carer experiences and outcomes
- Subjects of research. Any reimbursement or remuneration for these individuals should be covered by the research project's terms of participation
- Administrative activities to arrange their engagement.

NSW Health organisations must not use consumers, carers and community members simply to perform activities currently or previously conducted by paid NSW Health staff. However, individual participation is encouraged for activities where better outcomes can be achieved through partnering, for example, in co-delivery of education alongside a clinician.

3.2. Remuneration when an activity is postponed or cancelled

If a consumer, carer or community member is not given reasonable notice of the postponement or cancellation of the activity, the individual is entitled to be remunerated as originally planned. Reasonable notice is determined by the NSW Health organisation and should be documented as part of the recruitment or onboarding process.

3.3. Remuneration rates

Table 1. Recommended baseline rates for remuneration

	Open public forums, meetings, surveys and consultation	Meeting member/ participant (Working groups, focus groups, workshops and interviews)	Meeting chair/ speaker/ educator (Steering committees, education sessions)
Hourly rate	No payment	\$40	\$60
Daily rate*	N/A	\$220	\$330

*the daily rates are consistent with the NSW Public Service Commission’s [Classification and Remuneration Framework for NSW Boards and Committees](#) (Level C1). Daily rates may be subject to change in accordance with the Framework.

The addition of hourly rates reflects the shorter duration of most engagement activities. The recommended rates are based on a review of paid participation policies from across Australia. The recommended rates provide a baseline and do not prevent NSW Health organisations from paying higher rates, for example, if higher remuneration has been agreed for an activity already underway or for highly specialised activities. Consumers, carers and community members who are engaged in a NSW Health committee or working group as Chair receive a higher rate to recognise the increased responsibility and workload of the position.

Consideration may be given to offering payment to recognised Aboriginal Elders at a higher level to reflect their standing in their community and their specific cultural knowledge. The same applies to offering payment to other community leaders, particularly from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and/or new and emerging communities.

In calculating the time of participation, the time should be rounded up to the nearest hour. The minimum amount of remuneration payable for an activity is 1 hour. The hourly rate is to be paid for each *scheduled* hour of activity independent of whether the activity finishes earlier or slightly later (up to 15 minutes). For example, a meeting scheduled for 2 hours will attract participation fees of 2 hours, even if that meeting finished after 1.5 hours. If the meeting runs significantly past the scheduled time and is extended on the request of NSW Health staff, then remuneration can be provided for this additional time in 30-minute increments.

The remuneration rate assumes coverage of some preparation time for meetings or activities, such as arranging travel or support. For most activities, payment for additional preparation time is not required. However, payment for preparation time is at the discretion of the NSW Health organisation and some activities may merit this, for example, for reviewing grant applications, board meetings or committees with significant reading time required in advance. Preparation time can be funded if this action is:

- requested by the NSW Health organisation, and
- essential for the approved activity.

The remuneration amount for the additional activity must reflect the expected time required to complete the activity and be agreed and approved by the NSW Health organisation prior to undertaking the additional activity.

3.4. Processing remuneration

3.4.1. Submission of claims for payment

NSW Health organisations must establish local processes to facilitate submission, coordination and processing of claims.

Consumers, carers and community members are responsible for submitting any claims for remuneration to NSW Health within 30 calendar days from the date of the activity taking place.

A consumer, carer or community member may choose to waive any entitlement to remuneration. NSW Health organisations must ensure this is documented. Where possible, waived remuneration should be held to facilitate other partnering activity.

3.4.2. Approval of claims

NSW Health organisations are responsible for documenting the individual's attendance and participation in the approved activity. All claims must accurately reflect the individual's participation. Any disputes or claims for unapproved activities should be discussed with the individual. The dispute should be escalated to a senior manager for review if not resolved.

3.4.3. Payment

All payments should be processed within 30 days of receiving the claim. Payment is made by direct transfer to the consumer, carer or community member's nominated bank account. Cash payments to individuals are not endorsed by these guidelines.

Where the consumer, carer or community member is not able to accept payment by bank transfer (such that the individual does not have access to a bank account), payment may be made via gift cards or vouchers. The amount remunerated by gift card or voucher should be equal to the amount that would have been remunerated by bank transfer.

NSW Health organisations must establish local processes for documenting and receipting where gift cards and vouchers are used.

3.4.4. Taxation

Consumers, carers and community members are responsible for ensuring they are aware of their obligations to inform relevant government departments of any income received.

In most cases, remuneration is not taxed for consumers, carers and community members or eligible for superannuation contributions. This is because under Australian taxation legislation:

- 1) NSW Health organisations are defined as 'not-for-profit', and
- 2) Consumers, carers and community members are not employees.

The Australian Tax Office (ATO) provides guidance on not-for-profit organisations reimbursing and remunerating volunteers. In most cases, reimbursement and remuneration to consumers, carers and community members would not be assessable income and would therefore not be declared for tax purposes.

More information is available on the ATO website [Paying volunteers](#).

3.4.5. Consumer, carer and community participation purchased through external agencies

Some NSW Health organisations use recruiting companies to identify and contract consumers, carers and community members.

This Guideline does not apply to individuals under a contractual relationship with an external agency.

4. REIMBURSEMENT

Costs associated with participating in an approved activity should be paid directly by the NSW Health organisation where possible.

There may be circumstances where it is necessary for a consumer, carer or community member to pay for items to support their participation. Reasonable expenses incurred by participating in approved activities should be reimbursed to consumers, carers and community members, regardless of whether they are engaged on a paid or voluntary basis.

Consumers, carers and community members are to seek approval from the NSW Health organisation prior to incurring an expense. Any approved expenditure must align with the principles and examples outlined in NSW Health Policy Directive *Out of Pocket Expenses* ([PD2019 015](#)).

The expense must be:

- directly related to enabling participation in the approved activity
- supported by tax invoice/ receipts
- approved by an appropriate delegate officer
- reasonable and publicly defensible.

Expenses not eligible for remuneration

The following are examples of expenses not eligible for reimbursement:

- Printing costs that are not incurred at the direction or request of the NSW Health organisation
- Standard telephone and internet costs
- Parking fines or other traffic infringements
- Costs incurred through attendance at an event, seminar or conference as a matter of personal choice or interest and not at the request of the NSW Health organisation
- Tea, coffee, alcoholic beverages, lunches, morning tea and afternoon teas for social purposes when participating in eligible activities
- Tips and gratuities
- Reasonable travel time to/ from activities.

4.1. Reimbursement following cancellation or postponement of an activity

If an activity is cancelled or postponed, the consumer, carer or community member is entitled to be reimbursed for any eligible reasonable expenses already incurred and unable to be recovered.

4.2. Claims for reimbursement

Submission of claims

NSW Health organisations must establish local processes to facilitate submission, coordination and processing of claims.

Consumers, carers and community members should submit claims for expenses to a nominated NSW Health employee within 3 months of the activity. Sufficient documentation is required to confirm the expense (such as receipts, tax invoices or other evidence).

Staff are to document if an individual chooses to waive reimbursement.

Disputed claims

If the NSW Health organisation disputes the reimbursement claim, they must provide this response in writing to the consumer, carer or community member, notifying them of the reason and what is required to support the claim. This should occur within 2 weeks of the NSW Health organisation receiving the reimbursement claim.

Payment

All payments should be processed within 30 days of receiving the claim. Payment is made by direct transfer to the individual's nominated bank account, and consistent with the vendor payment processes managed by HealthShare NSW.

5. GIFTS AND BENEFITS FOR CONSUMERS, CARERS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

There may be circumstances where it is considered appropriate to provide a gesture of thanks to a consumer, carer or community member, for example, gift voucher, movie tickets.

Irrespective of whether the engagement is paid or voluntary, all gifts and/or benefits given must align with the principles of accountability, integrity and transparency. For further information, refer to the NSW Health Policy Directive *Conflicts of Interest and Gifts and Benefits* ([PD2015_045](#)).