

Charging Arrangements for NSW Ambulance Services

Summary NSW Ambulance provides services to NSW residents and non-residents. All services incur a fee. Some fees are discounted or waived, others are to be paid in full. Medicare does not cover these costs or services. NSW Ambulance must recoup its costs to continue offering services. This Policy Directive explains how the fees are calculated, who can be charged, and whether discounts apply or not.

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Policy Statement

NSW Health is committed to ensuring the sustainability of the NSW Public Health system. NSW Ambulance as a part of NSW Health is entitled to raise charges for services provided.

This Policy Directive advises of the charging arrangements for all NSW Ambulance services including primary emergency and non-emergency transport, Newborn and Paediatric Emergency Transport Services (NETS), treat-not-transport, standby services and inter-hospital emergency services.

Summary of Policy Requirements

NSW Ambulance fees are payable by patients who require services. In NSW, services provided to the State's residents are charged at 51% of the full cost of services for primary emergency services (including NETS). As such NSW Ambulance will raise invoices for services rendered. Where a patient has private health insurance that includes the provision of ambulance services, these invoices may be submitted to the private health insurer by either NSW Ambulance or the patient.

Pensioners and Concession card holders who hold a valid entitlement at the time of receiving a service in NSW will not have to pay for the ambulance service. This also applies to certain other NSW residents who meet specific criteria.

All non-emergency transport (including treat-not-transport and standby services) will be charged by NSW Ambulance at the prevailing rates.

NSW Ambulance will raise charges at full cost recovery for all non-NSW residents including overseas residents. This is applicable to emergency road, fixed wing and helicopter services.

Revision History

Version	Approved By	Amendment Notes
PD2025_013 April-2025	Deputy Secretary, Financial and Corporate Services & Chief Financial Officer	Added new section "International missions".
PD2021_024 July-2021	Secretary, NSW Health	Merge NETS and Ambulance into one PD, remove charges which will be issued by a separate Information Bulletin.
PD2020_031 September-2020	Secretary, NSW Health	Updates NETS charges as at 1 July 2020.
PD2020_029 August-2020	Secretary, NSW Health	Updates Ambulance Service charges as at 1 July 2020.
PD2019_033 July-2019	Secretary, NSW Health	Updates Ambulance Service charges as at 1 July 2019.
PD2019_031 July-2019	Secretary, NSW Health	Updates NETS charges as at 1 July 2019.
PD2018_026 July-2018	Secretary, NSW Health	Updates Ambulance Service charges as at 1 July 2018.
PD2018_025 July-2018	Secretary, NSW Health	Updates NETS charges as at 1 July 2018.
PD2017_017 June-2017	Secretary, NSW Health	Updates Ambulance Service charges as at 1 July 2017.
PD2017_016 June-2017	Secretary, NSW Health	Updates NETS charges as at 1 July 2017.
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PD2016_020 June-2016	Secretary, NSW Health	Updates NETS charges as at 1 July 2016.
PD2015_016 May-2015	Secretary, NSW Health	Updates Ambulance Service charges as at 1 July 2015.
PD2015_015 May-2015	Secretary, NSW Health	Updates NETS charges as at 1 July 2015.
PD2014_017 June-2014	Secretary, NSW Health	Updates NETS charges as at 1 July 2014.
PD2014_016 June-2014	Secretary, NSW Health	Updates Ambulance Service charges as at 1 July 2014.
PD2013_020 July-2013	Director-General	Updates Ambulance Service charges as at 1 July 2013.
PD2013_019 July-2013	Director-General	Updates NETS charges as at 1 July 2013.

PD2012_032 June-2012	Director-General	Updates Ambulance Service charges as at 1 July 2012.
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PD2011_036 June-2011	Director-General	Updates Ambulance Service charges as at 1 July 2011.
PD2011_035 June-2011	Director-General	Updates NETS charges as at 1 July 2011.
PD2010_043 June-2010	Deputy Director-General, Health System Support	Updates NETS charges as at 1 July 2010.
PD2010_042 June-2010	Deputy Director-General, Health System Support	Updates Ambulance Service charges as at 1 July 2010.
PD2009_038 June-2009	Deputy Director-General, Health System Support	Updates NETS with new charges as at 1 July 2009.
PD2009_037 June-2009	Deputy Director-General Health System Support	Updates Ambulance Service charges as at 1 July 2009.
PD2008_032 June-2008	Director-General	
PD2008_031 June-2008	Director-General	
PD2007_050 June-2007	Director-General	
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1. Background

NSW Ambulance provides emergency and non-emergency services to NSW residents, non-NSW residents and overseas visitors.

Services provided are not free and are not covered by Medicare.

In NSW, private health insurance policy holders including those with Ambulance Only policies, are covered for ambulance services. However, health fund coverage is determined by the patient's individual health fund provider. The patient should check with their provider to confirm policy details, including coverage for non-emergency transport.

NSW residents are charged at 51% of the actual cost for services, as the NSW Government provides a 49% subsidy. The fee is capped at a maximum charge.

Pensioners and Concession card holders who held a valid entitlement at the time of receiving a service in NSW will not have to pay for the ambulance service. A list of valid cards can be found on the NSW Ambulance website [Fees for NSW residents FAQ](#).

Certain other residents will also receive services at no cost. See the NSW Ambulance website [Fees for NSW residents FAQ](#) for more information.

All non-NSW residents (including overseas visitors) will be charged at full cost.

Local Health Districts (LHDs) and Specialty Health Networks (SHNs), under the Ambulance/Newborn and Paediatric Emergency Transport Service (NETS) Partnership Agreement fees are also included in this Policy Directive.

Ambulance and NETS fees are reviewed annually and published in a separate [Information Bulletin](#).

1.1. About this document

This Policy Directive describes how fees are calculated and who is required to pay. Fees are based on the urgency of the service provided (emergency, non-emergency), the vehicle used (road transport, helicopter or fixed wing), whether it is an inter-hospital transfer, a treat-not-transport service or where a NSW Ambulance is on standby.

1.2. Legal and legislative framework

NSW Ambulance and NETS charges are gazetted by order pursuant to section 67L (Ambulance) and 69 (NETS) of the [Health Services Act 1997](#) (NSW).

2. Calculations and Non-Emergency Criteria

All fees, except for inter-hospital emergency helicopter service, are charged a:

- set call out fee; plus
- an additional set charge per kilometre or part thereof; and
- capped at a maximum set charge.

2.1. Calculation of transport kilometres

The total number of kilometres is calculated by determining the number of kilometres travelled by road:

- from the ambulance or Newborn and Paediatric Emergency Transport Service (NETS) base station nearest to the location where the patient was picked up or treated; and
- from that pickup location (where transport for the patient begins) to the place where that patient disembarked the transport (or where more than one ambulance was used disembarked from the last ambulance used in that transport); and
- from that place of disembarkation/location of treatment, to the base ambulance station referred to in the first dot point.

If transported by fixed wing aircraft or helicopter (primary emergency services) the number of kilometres is equivalent to what would have been travelled by road had no fixed wing aircraft or helicopter been available.

2.2. Calculation of transport time for helicopters (inter-hospital only)

The inter-hospital helicopter service fee is made up of a set fee for the first 30 minutes or part thereof and an additional set rate charged every 6 minutes for any further period.

The number of minutes for helicopter services is calculated using a *start* and *end time*. The *start* time is:

- when the helicopter engine or engines are turned on; OR
- if the engines are already on, the time at which the helicopter is dispatched by an air ambulance controller.

The *end* time is:

- the time the helicopter engine or engines are turned off at the helicopter's operational base; OR
- the time at which the helicopter is otherwise dispatched by an air ambulance controller or other authority.

2.3. Non-emergency criteria (including primary non-emergency and inter-hospital)

A non-emergency service is a NETS or NSW Ambulance road service that is booked no later than 6pm on the day prior to service delivery with the:

- service to commence and be completed between the hours of 8am and 6pm on the nominated service delivery date,

otherwise, the emergency service charge applies.

All NSW Ambulance services provided by a dedicated patient transport vehicle, where available, irrespective of time of booking or time of transport, are classified as “non-emergency” services.

3. Fee Explanations

3.1. Primary emergency services

NSW Ambulance services or Newborn and Paediatric Emergency Transport Service (NETS) may be provided by road, fixed wing aircraft, helicopter or a combination of these, from:

- the scene of an accident, illness or injury, to a public hospital or other destination nominated by NSW Ambulance
- a private hospital to a public hospital or other destination nominated by NETS.

3.2. Inter-hospital emergency service

NSW Ambulance services or NETS may provide transport by road, fixed wing aircraft, helicopter or a combination of these, from one public hospital to another public hospital.

Charges for road or fixed wing transport shall be paid by the hospital or health service sending the person(s) being transported. However, in the case of an inter-hospital helicopter service, the transport fee shall be apportioned equally between the hospital or health service sending the person being transported and the hospital or health service receiving that person.

3.3. Treat-not-transport service (NSW Ambulance Only)

Treat-not-transport is a service where a patient is provided with ambulance services at the scene of an accident, illness or injury and does not require ambulance transport to a health facility or any other destination. The fee is calculated in accordance with the primary emergency service fee scale (primary emergency services).

3.4. Standby service fee (NSW Ambulance Only)

NSW Ambulance(s) are required to stand by at scenes such as industrial accidents for the purpose of providing services to emergency workers or others at the scene of the incident. Neither transport nor treatment may be required.

This fee is payable by the owners of premises or vehicles involved in dangerous incidents or events where an ambulance is required to be present (for example, at chemical spills or other industrial accidents). The fee is calculated in accordance with:

- the primary emergency service fee for the first hour or part thereof (provided that such total fee shall not exceed the maximum charge); and
- an additional set fee for every 15 minutes after the first hour.

Note: that a treat-not-transport service provided by an NSW Ambulance standby service is covered in the standby service fee provided the treatment is related to the event. However, if a 'primary emergency service' is required due to a standby service dangerous incident/event, a primary emergency service charge will apply.

3.5. International missions

Emergency fixed wing services requiring a response to or from international locations will be charged to NSW residents (and non-NSW residents, including overseas residents) on an actual cost recovery basis, where personal travel insurance does not cover the cost.

Private health insurance policy holders or pension and concession card holders are not covered for these missions.

4. Charging Criteria

Where 2 or more persons are transported/treated concurrently by the same service, each person shall be charged a fee calculated in accordance with the primary emergency service. However, this does not apply when 2 or more patients are transferred concurrently between any NSW public hospital in NSW.

NSW Ambulance attendances at sporting and recreational fixtures are to be based on cost recovery. A treat-not-transport service provided by an ambulance in attendance at sporting and recreational fixtures is covered in the attendance fee. However, if a primary emergency service is required at sporting and recreational fixtures a primary emergency service charge will apply.

The rates described in this Policy Directive and associated information bulletins are applicable to:

- NSW Ambulance services provided to residents of NSW (primary) and public hospitals in NSW. Residents of NSW are charged at 51% of the full cost of service for primary emergency services.
- NSW Ambulance services provided to non-NSW residents and overseas visitors are charged at 100% of the full cost (all services).
- Newborn and Paediatric Emergency Transport Service (NETS) services provided to NSW public hospitals (inter-hospital emergency service) and NSW private hospitals (primary).

4.1. Full cost of service fees

Full cost of service shall be charged for emergency road, fixed wing and helicopter services for:

- Non-NSW residents of other states, territories or countries; and
- Services as a result of a compensable incident, excluding services covered under compulsory third party (CTP) insurance.

5. Goods and Services Tax (GST)

NSW Ambulance services are GST-free under section 38-10 of the [A New Tax System \(Goods and Services Tax\) Act 1999](#) (Commonwealth) where the service is provided to a person as part of their treatment. NSW Ambulance services deemed GST-free are as follows:

- primary emergency service
- primary non-emergency service
- treat-not-transport service.

5.1. Taxable supply

NSW Ambulance services are a taxable supply (subject to GST) and accordingly GST must be added to the rates advised in this Policy Directive and related information bulletins in respect of:

- inter-hospital emergency services*
- inter-hospital non-emergency services*
- standby services
- NSW Ambulance attendances at sporting and recreational fixtures.

*GST is not applicable to NSW Health entities.