



Payment

HCC upholds the importance of acknowledging and recognising the value of consumer expertise and input. We contend that payment to Consumer Representatives is a formal acknowledgement of the value of their knowledge and experience. Remuneration in the form of a sitting fee per hour or per meeting is accepted as best practice Consumer Engagement. Where someone is participating in a consumer engagement activity and their time is funded by an organisation (for example, where an HCC staff member is attending in their HCC capacity), they will not generally attract a consumer participation payment.

Recommended rates and out-of-pocket expenses have been derived from the Consumer, Family, Carer and Community Paid Partnership Policy, published by the Mental Health Commission WA. However we have noted a two-hour minimum payment rather than a three-hour minimum should apply. See the table below for recommended payment rates.

Good practice

Payment policy and procedures need to be ratified and explained to Consumer Representatives as part of their introduction to a committee. The name and contact details of the staff member allocated to this task should be made available to the Consumer Representative.

Consumer Representatives may require reimbursement for travel expenses prior to attending the meeting or activity, such as a cab-charge voucher. It is recommended to discuss this with them in advance. Payments after consultations need to be made promptly.

[Reference: Health Consumers' Council WA SAA_05_CCE Engagement Policy, Dec 2019]



Consumer Representative/Consultation Payment Table

Tier → Activity ↓	Attendee (no payment)	Active Participant \$35 per hour or part thereof (2 hour min)	Advisor \$70 per hour or part thereof*	Consultant \$**
Forums, consultations, workshops or focus groups	General Attendance	Specifically invited to actively participate	Co-design and co-produce	Engaged to lead forum, consultation, workshop or focus group
HCC Committees or Groups with Terms of Reference	N/A	Member of a service or system level, executive or strategic level HCC Committee or Group Chair of a service level committee or group	Chair or Co-Chair of a system, executive or strategic level HCC Committee or Group	Engaged to provide impartial guidance, knowledge and/or expertise.
Recruitment or selection panels	N/A	N/A	Member	Chair
Other Projects	N/A	Special Projects or Duties	Special Projects or Duties	Engaged to lead the development of a policy, process, procedure, resource, etc

- In addition to the suggested remuneration above, it is recommended that consumer participants be reimbursed for travel expenses/parking and that refreshments appropriate to the meeting time are provided. If expected to print out meeting papers, it is recommended that an allowance is also made to cover that expense.
- If significant preparation time is required prior to a meeting the HCC recommends organisations pay an additional amount that appropriately reflects the preparation hours required. Written materials to be provided in hard copy format (mailed) in addition to email wherever possible, in recognition of the high cost of printing.

Activities that **do not** attract the offer of a participation payment include:

- Open invitation forums and consultations.
- Ad hoc discussions and communications with HCC.
- Activities and participation that have not been agreed upon prior to engagement.
- Time taken to travel to an activity.
- Communication with HCC as part of an open consultation process e.g. submissions, surveys, feedback.
- People supporting consumers e.g. families and carers attending engagement activities.



* Consideration may be given to offering payment to recognised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 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 and/or new and emerging communities.

** The hourly rate is determined by the prospective Consultant in response to a request to quote.

Frequently Asked Questions

(adapted from the [Change Foundation “Should Money Come into It? Report”](#))

Q: When should the decision around payment be made?

A: We recommend that this is decided upon before recruiting for an engagement activity. Before people sign on, they need to know whether they will be paid.

Q: If paying, how much to pay?

A: Our rate is derived from the rates in the [Mental Health Commission’s Consumer, Family, Carer and Community Paid Partnership Policy](#) which was developed with input from consumers, families, carers, WA Government, and other stakeholders. This is based on the fact that Health Consumers’ Council is a non-profit organisation with a limited budget. This may be different for your organisation.

Q: What about reimbursement for expenses?

A: We generally reimburse for expenses (e.g., parking, travel, meals) and take it as a given that all organisations do. Whether to pay for participation is a separate question.

Q: If an organisation pays participants in some projects, must it do so in all projects?

A: At Health Consumers’ Council, we consider each project on a case-by-case basis. We see this as a valid approach for other organisations too. We recommend that a consistent approach to decision making is followed each time in the interests of transparency.

Q: If payment is offered, can a participant refuse it?

A: Yes.

Q: What are the “pros” of offering payment?

A: Some “pros” are that payment shows respect and appreciation; it is usually the most successful way to attract people; it’s a way to be “accountable” to participants; it may make it easier—or even possible—for low-income people to take part; and it may increase a sense of equity at the table, since professionals and staff are being paid for their time.

Q: What are the “cons”?

A: Again, there are many. People might sign up for money rather than genuine interest; volunteerism could be harmed (i.e., growing expectations of payment, for roles with the same organisation or beyond); possibility of bias (participants feeling less independent and feeling loyal



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to the organisation and its views); and, in the case of government-sponsored activities, added costs for the healthcare system.

Q: What is the Health Consumers' Council position?

A: Our concern is to work within the principles of fair, equitable and barrier-free public engagement. This is why we decide on a case-by-case basis.

[Reference: Health Consumers' Council WA SAA_05_CCE Engagement Policy, Dec 2019]