1. **Policy**

The Mental Health Commission of NSW is guided by the lived experience of people with a mental illness and their families and carers in the mental health reform process and aims to build reform of the mental health sector which is truly consumer and carer responsive. This commitment is enshrined in the *Mental Health Commission Act 2012* under section 12(2)(d)(i) as follows - *In exercising its functions under this Act, the Commission is to engage and consult with people who have a mental illness and their families and carers.*

Paid participation recognises the valuable, specialised and expert contributions made by people who have a first-hand experience of a mental illness or are a family member or carer.

People with “lived experience” include those living with and recovering from mental illness and their families and carers. Depending on the context, it can also refer to suicide attempt survivors and family and friends of survivors or loved ones lost to suicide.
1.1 Benefits of consumer and carer participation

The Commission acknowledges and appreciates the contribution of people with or recovering from a mental illness and their families and carers. Consumers, families and carers hold expertise that is essential to the effectiveness and success of the Commission. Being led by the expertise of people with a lived experience of mental illness provides the Commission and its stakeholders with:

- a greater understanding of what it is like to experience mental illness or care for a person with a mental illness
- first-hand knowledge of the experiences of recovery
- a clear demonstration that those who are living well with mental illness represent hope for others.

Being led by people with lived experience also contributes to reducing discrimination and stigma associated with mental illness.

1.2 Scope of the policy

Paid participation is defined as an activity whereby a person with lived experience is personally invited by the Commission to participate in an activity through which the Commission will receive a benefit that assists it in fulfilling its functions under the Mental Health Commission Act 2012.

Payment of participation fees will be made when individuals:

- are invited personally by the Commission to make a significant contribution to its work
- are not funded by another organisation, group or council to represent it in engagements with the Commission.

The payment of participation fees will not be made under the following circumstances:

- where the individual is funded by another organisation, group or council or the Public Service to represent it in engagements with the Commission
- for open invitations to attend forums or presentations by the Commission
- for ad hoc communication and discussions with the Commission
- where an individual is a professional consultant, contracted to advise on and/or facilitate other mental health or suicide prevention activities or matters at the Commission.
- for preparation or reading time (unless agreed by the Commission in advance).

Where payment for participation is intended to be made by the Commission, it will be discussed with the participant in advance of any activity that may be considered eligible for payment.

1.3 Participation activities

The scope of consumer and carer participation activities at the Commission may include:

- recruitment, e.g. as a member of an Assessment Panel for staff appointments to the Commission
- initiatives for increasing community awareness of mental illness
- research and evaluation activities
- policy advice.

The methods of consumer and carer participation activities at the Commission may include:

- individual or group consultations
2. Payment rates

2.1 Daily rates

Paid participation rates are consistent with the NSW Public Service Commission’s *Classification and Remuneration Framework for NSW Boards and Committees*. Daily rates may be subject to change in accordance with the Framework.

The daily rate is $220 ($110 for half day) for general participation and $350 ($175 for half day) for participants asked to chair a meeting or event.

Daily fees include travel time to and from the participation activity. Unless agreed in advance with the Commission, preparation time is not to be included in the overall hours of participation.

The maximum time for working and/or travelling which may be remunerated in one day is 7.5 hours.

2.2 Out-of-pocket costs

The Commission’s policy on out-of-pocket expenses for consumers and carers who receive payment for their participation in Commission activities follows the guidance provided in the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet M2013-06 *NSW Government Boards and Committees Guidelines*.

Consumers and carers will be reimbursed for legitimate expenses incurred while carrying out their duties such as travel, accommodation and meals. Receipts must be obtained for expenses less than $82.50 including GST, or tax invoices if above that amount. If the receipt is more than $82.50 including GST and a tax invoice is not provided, only the non-GST component for the expense is able to be reimbursed.

Means of travel

Consistent with NSW Government policy, travel arrangements should ensure an economical means of travel is arranged, which also meets the convenience of the consumer or carer participating in the Commission activity.

The need to obtain overnight accommodation shall be determined by the Commission and the consumer or carer, having regard to the safety and wellbeing and local conditions applicable in the area.

Where consumers or carers are required to attend meetings, conferences, etc. which involve evening seminars, or are required to make an early start at work in a location away from their normal workplace, overnight accommodation shall be appropriately granted.

2.2.1 Travel expenses
Consistent with the *NSW Government Boards and Committees Guidelines*, consumers or carers participating in activities for the Commission are entitled to be reimbursed the amount of actual expenses incurred in relation to their paid participation activities, subject to maximum levels.

The Commission will reimburse the cost of actual expenses incurred up to the maximum daily amounts in Category C in the ATO Table of the Department of Finance and Services’ 2014-08 *Australian and Overseas Travelling Allowances for Official Travel by Senior Officials* for domestic travel involving an overnight stay.

Actual meal expenses incurred for travel not involving an overnight stay will be reimbursed by the Commission up to limits set in section 1.2 of the *Australian and Overseas Travelling Allowances for Official Travel by Senior Officials*, as amended from time to time.

### 2.2.2 Accommodation and air travel

Travel arrangements must comply with the Department of Finance and Services’ 2014-07 *Policy on Official Travel within Australia and Overseas*.

The Commission will arrange accommodation, where required, on behalf of consumers and carers in relation to their paid participation activities.

Consumers and carers will be reimbursed the amount of expenses actually incurred, up to set thresholds for daily travelling allowances, less the actual cost of accommodation to the Commission, consistent with the current daily travelling allowances from the Department of Finance and Services’ 2014-08 *Australian and Overseas Travelling Allowances for Official Travel by Senior Officials*, as amended from time to time.

The Commission will arrange air travel on behalf consumers and carers in relation to their paid participation activities, where required. In line with NSW Government policy, the Commission will purchase economy class fares at the cheapest fare available that meets the consumer or carer’s logistical needs.

### 2.2.3 Claims and process

Claims for paid participation rates and out-of-pocket expenses should be submitted to the relevant Commission Officer with responsibility for the paid participation activity using the claim form that will be provided, supported by receipts and other relevant documentation for payment. Following the conclusion of paid participation activities, the claim form should be submitted to the Commission within one month.

### 3. Procedure

**The Commission’s staff, contractors and volunteers will:**
- Routinely establish, monitor and evaluate mechanisms that facilitate consumer and carer participation, influence and leadership in the work of the Commission.

**Officer with responsibility for arranging the paid participation activity will:**
- Select individuals for participation using the Commission’s consumer and carer network, or through other appropriate means
- Issue invitations that include:
  - detail on the scope and nature of the participation activity
  - an estimate of the time and effort required
  - a claim form for logging participation and travel hours, any out-of-pocket costs and bank details for reimbursement
- an Australian Tax Office Statement by Supplier form (this form does not apply if the individual has their own ABN)
- Once the invitation has been accepted, contact the individual to confirm any further details and arrange any required travel
- Assess and forward completed claim forms for paid participation rates and any out-of-pocket expenses to the Business Services Coordinator.

Executive Assistant will:
- Book official travel and accommodation, where required, on behalf of consumers and carers selected for paid participation activities.

Business Services Coordinator will:
- Provide assistance to consumers and carers on claiming out-of-pocket expenses
- Assess and process approved paid participation fees and out-of-pocket expense claims for consumers and carers
- Collect data on the numbers of consumers, family members and carers who participate in paid participation activities for the Commission on a financial year basis.

Manager, Communications and Stakeholder Relations will:
- Maintain the Commission’s database of consumer and carers for recruitment for paid participation activities.

Executive Director will:
- Provide final approval of paid participation fees and out-of-pocket expense claims for consumers and carers.

The Commissioner will:
- Encourage a culture whereby the diverse expertise and views of mental health consumers, family members and carers are used to guide the Commission about current issues.

4. Further Guidance and Resources


The Australian Tax Office Statement by Supplier form for suppliers not required to quote an ABN is available at: https://www.ato.gov.au/Forms/Statement-by-a-supplier-not-quoting-an-ABN/

Appendix A: Example of Selection Criteria

Selection criteria for people with a lived experience of mental illness, their families and carers

The key criteria applied when recruiting people with a lived experience, their families, and carers to engage with Commission through paid participation is a demonstrated ability to provide expert and specialist advice and perspectives to inform the Commission’s work.

For example, such perspectives could include:

- A particular understanding of the principles of participation by people with a lived experience, families and carers
- Being widely informed of and able to represent lived experiences beyond one’s own personal experience
- Familiarity or the ability to gain familiarity with state, territory and national policy issues in mental health and suicide prevention
- Being able to provide advice and strategic direction to the Commission on behalf of people with lived experience, families and carers
- Being able to problem-solve, use initiative and contribute to the goals of the Commission.

The above perspectives are not mandatory and are provided as guidance only as they may not be appropriate in all circumstances, such as when the Commission wishes to recruit individuals to tell their own personal story, rather than speak on behalf of others.

Other perspectives and attributes which are considered valuable

Demonstrated ability to maintain networks with national, state and/or territory-based mental health and suicide prevention organisations or government bodies and their constituents.

Well-developed interpersonal skills including the ability to work as part of a team, respect other views, and also maintain good working relationships with Commission staff, contractors and volunteers and other stakeholders in the policy development process e.g. government, service providers.

Well-developed communication skills including listening, providing feedback, negotiation and the demonstrated ability to use these to achieve results.

An understanding of the diversity of the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of our community, and the impact this has on people with lived experience and their families’ experiences of mental illness and suicide.

A letter of support from relevant organisations or entities outlining what makes them suitable for paid participation activities.