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department
of disability,
housing &
community
services

community partners

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT PACKAGES (ISP) POLICY AND PROCEDURES

This document provides Disability ACT with policy advice about the planning, application, and facilitation of ISP's, as well as the funding mechanisms and processes for administering the ISP program.

This policy also informs people who have a disability, their families and agencies about ISP policy in the ACT.

February 2007

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD..... 4

1 INTRODUCTION TO ISPS..... 5

1.1 What is an Individual Support Package..... 5

1.2 The availability and targeting of ISP funds. 5

1.3 ISPs — a new approach 5

1.4 ISP Principles 6

2 FUNDING MECHANISMS & PACKAGES..... 7

2.1 Funding recurrence 7

2.2 Funding Mechanisms (overview)..... 7

2.3 Individual and Family Controlled Funding 9

2.4 Individually Tied Funding (Previously known as brokered funding)..... 9

2.5 Individualised Funding (Previously known as Direct funding) 11

2.6 Individual Grants..... 11

2.7 ISP Funding Packages 12

3 MANAGEMENT OF INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT PACKAGES.....14

3.1 Guidelines for Expenditure of ISP Funds..... 14

3.2 The Funded Support Plan 17

3.3 Assistance in developing a Funded Support Plan 18

3.4 Facilitation Training20

3.5 Acquittal Processes20

3.6 Return of Surplus Individually Tied Funds 21

3.7 Review of Individually Tied Funding Arrangements22

3.8 National Minimum Data Set (NMDS)24

4 APPLICATION PROCESS..... 25

4.1 Application process — a quick guide25

4.2 Promotion of ISP Funding Rounds26

4.3 Application Forms and Information packs.....26

4.4 Eligibility27

4.5 The Application Panel.....28

4.6 The Rating and Short-listing Process29

4.7 Meetings with an Assessor (Packages 2, 3 and 4 only)..... 31

4.8 Individual Funding Recommendations32

4.9 Approval.....33

4.10 Notification33

4.11 Grievance/Appeals Processes33

5. EMERGENCY SUPPORT..... 35

5.1 Eligibility Criteria for Emergency Support.....35

5.2 Risk Factors Addressed by Emergency Support36

5.3 Decision Making Process.....36

5.4 Limitations of Emergency Funding.....37

5.5 Review38

5.6 Timeframes38

6	PORTABILITY —WHEN AN INDIVIDUAL RELOCATES.....	40
6.1	Inter-State Portability	40
6.2	Inter-Service Portability	40
7	ADMINISTRATION	43
7.1	Payment Processes	43
7.2	Indexation	43
7.3	Privacy and Confidentiality	43
	APPENDIX A: CURRENT PACKAGE FUNDING LIMITS.....	44
	APPENDIX B: MERITS REVIEW BODIES	45
B1:	ACT Merits Review Bodies	45
B2:	Commonwealth Merits Review bodies	46

Foreword

Disability ACT has responsibility for planning, co-ordinating, facilitating and where necessary, providing and monitoring services for people who have a disability in the ACT and the people who support them. Individual Support Packages are one way in which the ACT Government responds to the needs of people who have a disability. The ACT Government also provides support through:

- *Generic services*
- *Specialist disability services*
- *Government provided disability services; and*
- *Subsidised services.*

Individual Support Packages (ISP's) can provide effective and flexible support to people who have a disability. However, funding alone cannot improve people's lives.

Disability ACT recognises the enormous effort people who have a disability, families, carers, community members, community agencies, and other government agencies make to the lives of people who have a disability, and their contributions to maintain a viable and quality disability support sector.

This policy provides people with disabilities, community agencies, and government agencies with clear guidelines about how ISP funding is allocated, managed, administered, monitored, and reviewed.

I would like to acknowledge the work of following the people who have contributed to the development of this policy including:

Reviewers of Disability ACT's previous policy

- *Robyn Maher*
- *Sam Page*

Members of the ISP reference groups including

- *Angela Seymour: ACROD;*
- *Paul Bartholomew: ACROD;*
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- *Larissa Cowlshaw: Secretariat*
- *Felicity Webb: Secretariat*
- *Pearl Snaddon: Secretariat*
- *Barbara Baikie: Chair*
- *Sally Gibson: Chair*

Finally I would like to thank the policy development team: Ros Hayes, Richard Basnett, Ian Ross, Jessica Gallagher and Gerry McKeon. Disability ACT will monitor the application of this policy and make adjustments as needed to ensure that it remains relevant to the people it serves.

Lois Ford

Executive Director Disability ACT

1 INTRODUCTION TO ISPs

1.1 What is an Individual Support Package

An Individual Support Package (ISP) is funding allocated an individual who decides, within the guidelines outlined in this policy, how the funds will be used to obtain the supports and services that will best respond to their individual circumstances.

ISP funding is not an entitlement. It is allocated to those with greatest priority according to an assessment process. ISP funding is not intended to replace supports provided by other community or government services or schemes, but rather to complement the range of supports and services already available in the community.

The focus of ISP funding is to assist individuals with disabilities, and families who are supporting adults with disabilities, to:

- Minimise the effects of the disability and maximise independence through the provision of timely and appropriate support,
- Make a substantial difference to the quality of life for an individual; and
- Strengthen and support family members in their roles as mothers, fathers, siblings, partners and carers.

1.2 The availability and targeting of ISP funds.

Disability ACT is only able to offer funding for new ISP's or to increase funding for existing ISP's in those years when the ACT Government allocates funding for this purpose through the annual budget process.

The Department of Disability, Housing & Community Services may also set further parameters, priorities, or targets in allocating the funds. These decisions will be made in accord with the Department's strategic plan, and based on the Department's current data.

1.3 ISPs — a new approach

ISPs were introduced into the ACT in the 1990's to assist people with a disability living in institutional care, or at imminent risk of entering institutional care, to live in the community. Since then the use of ISPs has expanded to include:

- Addressing gaps in the service system;
- Providing individual control over the use of funds; and
- Assisting consumers with high or complex needs.

In 2003, DACT evaluated the extent to which ISPs are person-centred. The evaluation included consultation with people who have ISPs, community agencies and families. The evaluation found that there were a number of areas in which DACT could improve the way in which ISPs were designed and managed.

In developing a new approach to ISPs, DACT reviewed best practice examples of programs from

other Australian and overseas jurisdictions to identify and incorporate features of successful approaches to individual funding.

DACT established an ISP Reference Group consisting of ISP holders and community and government representatives to provide advice on the consultation process and to help plan the implementation of any agreed changes. With the assistance of the Reference Group, 17 proposed changes to the ISP Program were identified and outlined in a consultation paper; *A New Approach To Individual Support Packages*. This paper is available on the departmental website www.dhcs.act.gov.au (click on the publications tab).

The consultation paper was widely circulated across the disability sector for comment. DACT hosted a number of discussion forums for stakeholders. The response to the proposed changes was generally positive and informed the policy development. Further changes and clarifications were made to the policy document following feedback from current ISP recipients in February 2007.

This ISP policy complements DACT's broader funding arrangements and DACT's strategic direction, currently articulated in *Future Directions: a Framework for the ACT 2004—08*.

1.4 ISP Principles

Allocations of ISPs to individuals are based on the following principles.

- 1) Each ISP is allocated on the basis of individual needs, subject to the availability of resources and within clear guidelines regarding what funding can be used for.
- 2) With adequate support, people with a disability, their families and carers, are in the best position to determine their own needs, design their supports and control the resources and supports available to them.
- 3) Access to independent advice and information about support options is necessary to allow people with a disability, their family and carers, to make informed decisions.
- 4) Supports and services purchased with ISP funding are consistent with community standards of quality and safety.
- 5) ISPs can provide resources to assist with everyday support needs as well as opportunities to participate in the community and hold valued social roles.
- 6) ISPs complement the natural supports provided by family, friends and the community and supplement the range of formal services and other forms of government assistance available to people with a disability.
- 7) Supports provided by family and carers are valued and recognised.
- 8) Supports and funding are characterised by flexibility and individual design.
- 9) Decision-making processes for allocating; negotiating and reviewing ISPs are clear and transparent.
- 10) There is consistency and equity in decision-making with regard to which people and activities are eligible for funding and how much funding is provided.
- 11) ISP funding must be used in a way that is financially responsible and accountable. This should be in line with supporting and improving life for people with a disability, their family and carers.

2 FUNDING MECHANISMS & PACKAGES

2.1 Funding recurrence

ISP funding may be offered on a recurrent or non-recurrent basis. Individuals may be offered a combination of recurrent and non-recurrent funding.

Recurrent ISP's

Recurrent funding is provided on an ongoing basis. Individuals in receipt of recurrent funding will receive the same amount of funding each year without needing to reapply. Recurrent funds will increase each year in accord with the Government's agreed indexation rate (Refer 7.2).

Recurrent funds are subject to review by Disability ACT (Refer 3.7)

Non-Recurrent ISP's

Non-recurrent funds are available only for a fixed period of time. Non-recurrent funding is therefore not subject to indexation. Disability ACT will not usually review non-recurrent funds, but reserves the right to do so.

2.2 Funding Mechanisms (overview)

Individual Support Packages may be offered in three ways depending on the individual's circumstances and the range of services needed. People may receive support through one or more of these funding mechanisms:

Individually Tied Funding (previously known as Brokered Funding):

- Allows individuals to make day-to-day decisions about the services they purchase, and to adjust services and service agencies as required.
- Is often provided where an individual's support arrangements are **likely to be unstable**, where temporary arrangements are in place, or where the individual requires coordination of a number of supports.
- May be recurrent or non-recurrent.

Individualised Funding (previously known as Direct Funding):

- Allows individuals to select an agency to provide services, and negotiate the services that will be provided to them.
- Is often provided where an individual's support arrangements are **likely to be stable** and involves a single or small number of agencies.
- Is commonly used for recurrent services, but may be for non-recurrent arrangements.

Individual Grants

- Are small non-recurrent allocations for a specific service or support.
- May be paid to an agency or directly to an individual's bank account.

Table 1 (see below) outlines the characteristics of each of these funding mechanisms. For purposes of comparison information on block funded services is also provided. A more detailed description of each funding mechanism follows.

Funding Mechanism	ISP packages (Refer policy 2.7)	Description	Service Entry	Service flexibility	Portability	Acquittal requirements	Limits and conditions
Individualised Funding (Formerly Direct Funding)	Package 3 Package 4 Package 2 may also be considered where a clear transitional outcome is established for the service.	An agreed total level of funding is allocated to an agency for a specific individual. The agency pools funds for all individuals receiving this service type, together with any other funds that may be provided through a block funding arrangement. Individuals may negotiate specific service requirements through a Funded Support Plan.	An individual is allocated funds through the application process. The individuals select an agency from a list defined by DACT. Individuals negotiate service entry and specific requirements with the agency through a Funded Support Plan	The Agency may use the total funds available to manage the fluctuations of service demand. The agency may purchase from external Service Providers in delivery of the agreed service.	An individual is able to transfer to other Agencies. Where the current arrangements involve shared resources, the viability of the service must be considered in this process	6 month acquittal to DACT against the agreed level of service output (Individuals are not identified in the acquittal)	Upper limits apply (see appendix A)
Individually Tied Funding (Formerly Brokerage)	Package 2 Package 3 Package 4 Package 1 may also be Individually Tied.	A specified amount of funding is paid to an auspice agency to purchase a range of services for an individual up to the maximum limit of each individual's Funded Support Plan. The funds are tied to that individual. The auspice agency may charge administration fees of up to 10% of the individual's package.	An individual is allocated funds through the application process. The individuals select an Auspice agency from a defined list.	The funds are only available for the named individual. The individual may make decisions about when and how the services will be provided. The Auspice agency only pays for services used by the individual.	The Auspice agency, on behalf of an individual purchases services from a range of providers. Individuals may change providers when they wish to. Individuals may change auspice agency if they wish.	6 monthly acquittal to DACT against the funds allocated to each individual Individuals receive acquittal as well as DACT.	Upper limits apply (see appendix A) The Auspice agency's Administration fees are paid out of the funding allocation.
Individual Grant	Package 1	Small non-recurrent funding paid directly to an individual.	An individual is allocated funding through an application process.	Not applicable. Funds direct paid to individual	Not applicable. Funds direct paid to individual	Acquittal to DACT by receipt	Lower and upper limits apply (see appendix A)
Block Funding (Not ISP funding: provided for comparison purposes only)	Not applicable	An agreed total level of funding is allocated to an agency who in return provides an agreed level of service output	The Agency may determine which individuals have priority for services within their policy framework and the broad requirements of their Service Agreement with DACT.	The Agency may use the total funds available to manage the fluctuations of service user demand.	The funded place is allocated by the agency. In some circumstances an individual may be able to negotiate with DACT and the agency to transfer to another agency.	6-month acquittal to DACT against the agreed level of service output.	Nil

2.3 Individual and Family Controlled Funding

This policy does not, at present, cover individual or family management of ISP funds.

Disability is supporting a consumer-based organisation to develop a proposal for an option to self-manage funding (enabling *inter alia* staff employment). This policy will be amended as necessary to enable consumer controlled funding.

2.4 Individually Tied Funding (Previously known as brokered funding)

Individually Tied Funding refers to ISP funds that are paid to an agency (known as a auspice agency) to purchase services and equipment for a specified individual. The individual makes decisions about what services will be purchased within their available funding and the expenditure guidelines (refers 3.1).

The ISP funds are ‘tied’ to that individual, and may only be used by the auspice agency to purchase support services for the named individual.

An auspice agency usually only pays for services actually used by the individual, however should it be agreeable to both the individual and the service provider, local arrangements can be made. For Example if an individual elects to purchase a service that is only available in blocks for a set period of time, the individual may need to pay for services on days in which they did not attend.

In any financial year, expenditure cannot exceed the maximum amount allocated to each individual (this is identified in the auspice agency’s contract with Disability ACT). An exception applies where an individual has retained a level of unspent funds from a previous financial year Under these circumstances, an individual may expend up to, a combined total of their individual allocation plus the total amount of funds the individual was permitted to retain from the previous financial year (limitations apply, refer 3.6).

An auspice agency may charge for coordination and administration of ISP funding. These charges will be clearly specified in the Funded Support Plan.

- Coordination assists individuals to plan and implement their plans. Coordination may also involve facilitating community linkages and negotiating services. The level of co-ordination required will vary from individual to individual. Coordination costs are paid at an hourly rate set by the agency.
- Administration fees are charged to cover the cost of purchasing, recording, and reporting expenditure. Administration fees may be charged at a flat rate or as a percentage of the total ISP allocated. The percentage may vary depending on the complexity of the purchasing activities undertaken, but may represent no more than 10% of an individual’s total ISP allocation.

An auspice agency usually purchases services from other agencies (“third parties”), however, in some circumstances an auspice agency may also be a provider of services. In these circumstances the auspice agency may purchase its own services, but is still required to separately account for expenditure on these services as described above.

Where an auspice agency uses ISP funds to purchase services from a third party agency, the auspice agency is responsible to ensure that the third party meets the same quality standards and other obligations that the auspice agency itself is bound to comply with under its contract with Disability ACT.

The Individual's funding allocation is clearly identified as a separate amount in the contract, and under the terms of the contract, the auspice agency must:

- Demonstrate to Disability ACT that the funds have been used within the ISP program guidelines and in accordance with the Individual Funding Plan.
- Provide individuals or their financial guardian with an account of their expenditure against their full ISP allocation every three months.
- Provide DACT with an acquittal of expenditure for each ISP allocation every six months signed by the individual allocated the funds; in addition
- Ensure that in all purchasing activities, the auspice agency remains responsible for the obligations outlined in its Agreement with the Territory.

At the end of a financial year Disability ACT will seek recovery of unused Individually Tied Funds. Recouped funds will be used by DACT to support other people in need. However, if individual circumstances require, individuals may retain and carry over a level of unspent funds into the next financial year to address contingencies (refer 3.6).

Individually Tied Funds are subject to review by Disability ACT. Reviews will occur at minimum once every five years (refer 3.7).

Individuals may elect to change their auspice agency under the Inter-Service Portability Policy (refer 6.2).

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The role of the auspice agency is to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Negotiate coordination and Auspice fees when an individual develops a Funded Support Plan (Refer 3.2).• Support the individual to make decisions within guidelines and available resources on:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ what support is required;○ what services will be engaged to provide support;○ how and when the services are to be provided; and○ how the service mix should alter over time to meet the changing requirements of the individual.• Support the individual to negotiate with the selected service provider.• Pay for the services.• Record expenditure for each individual.• Report expenditure to the individual (not less than quarterly).• Meet DACT's accountability, data, and reporting obligations as outlined in the Service Funding Agreement. |
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2.5 Individualised Funding (Previously known as Direct funding)

Individualised Funding refers to ISP funds that are paid to agencies that provide services to specified individuals.

The individual (supported by a facilitator if required - refer 3.3) negotiates with the agency the amount of service they wish to purchase, and any specific service requirements. This agreement is documented in a Funded Support Plan (refer 3.2).

Under the terms of the agency's contract with Disability ACT, people with individualised funding are identified as recipients of the services, and their individual funding is nominally identified, however the agency is not required to separately account or acquit individualised funds.

The agency may pool all individualised funding with any other block funding allocated by Disability ACT for that service type. This enables the agency to adjust support to all people receiving this service to meet fluctuating demands over time (eg. if at a particular time an individual requires less support from an agency, the agency may reallocate that support to other individuals who require more support for a period of time).

Under the contract, the agency is required to acquit expenditure of the total funds allocated, and the total hours of service it has provided. Individuals are not identified in the acquittal. The agency is not required to acquit Individualised Funds to individuals.

Individuals may change agency under the Inter-Service Portability Policy (refer 6.2).

The role of the agency is to:

1. Negotiate service levels with an individual when they develop a Funded Support Plan.
2. Negotiate specific service requirements with each individual.
3. Deliver services consistent with these agreements.
4. Negotiate changes to the individual's service requirements as appropriate to continue to respond to the individual's needs.
5. Record the total hours of service delivered for each service type.
6. Record expenditure of the total funds allocated.
7. Meet DACT's accountability, data, and reporting obligations.

2.6 Individual Grants

An Individual Grant is a one-off payment made directly to an individual for a defined purpose.

The individual is required to sign a *Grants Acceptance Form*, which outlines the level of funding provided, and the purpose for which the funds have been provided.

The individual may be paid by electronic funds transfer (EFT) or by cheque.

All funds must be expended within the *Guidelines for Use of ISP Funds* (refer 3.1).

Grant recipients must expend the funds within the period stated in the *Grant Acceptance Form*. Upon expenditure of the grant, recipients must complete and return a *Grant Acquittal Form*, to Disability ACT with a copy of all receipts within 30 days of the specified period.

If an individual is unable to spend part, or all, of their grant for the purpose for which it was allocated, or within the specified period, they are required to return the unused funds to Disability ACT along with their acquittal.

For the purposes of taxation, DACT does not provide Individual Grants as income. DACT provides Individual Grants to meet an individual's disability support needs. However, where there is doubt over the status of this funding, the individual should seek a private ruling from the Australian Taxation Office.

2.7 ISP Funding Packages

DACT currently provides four types of funding packages. Individuals may receive more than one type of funding package.

Package 1 is available only as an Individual Grant. Types 2,3 and 4 may be allocated as Individually Tied or Individualised Funding, or a combination of these.

As the ISP funding limits are subject to change they are included as an appendix to this policy. The current funding limits for each package type are found at Appendix A.

Packages may be allocated on a recurrent or non-recurrent basis, or a combination of recurrent and non-recurrent funding.

Package 1: Individual grants.

Individual grants fund or contribute to one-off purchases that will make a substantial impact on the quality of life of the individual. The funds are non-recurrent and must be expended within 12 months of the funding offer.

Examples of support arrangements include:

- Equipment
- Short term engagement of staff; and/or
- Workers or programs to assist in the development of individual or family skills.

Package 2: Small Transition Support Allocations.

Small transitional allocations are made available to assist individuals who require *temporary or transitional support* at a particular time in their lives. The support should be time limited and have a clearly defined outcome. Small Transitional Support Allocations are provided non-recurrently for a maximum of three years.

Examples of support arrangements include:

- Assistance with one-off purchases or temporary care arrangements;
- Transitional support through life stages or changing accommodation arrangements; and/or

- Planned support to build the development of individual or family skills and/or networks.

Package 3: Low to Moderate Sustained Support

This level of funding is made available to assist individuals who require *a low to moderate level of support* on an ongoing basis, and is allocated where their wellbeing, and/or that of their family would be at risk without this support.

Examples of support arrangements include:

- Low to moderate levels of personal care or home help;
- Respite;
- Assistance to sustain independent living or family support; and
- Support to enable participation in meaningful social, sport or recreation activities.

Package 4: High and Sustained Support

This funding is made available for individuals who require *a high and sustained level of support*, and is allocated where their wellbeing, and/or that of their family would be at risk without this support.

Examples of support arrangements include:

- High levels of personal care and home help;
- Direct support services to live independently either alone or with others; and
- Direct support services to participate in social recreational or vocational activities (other than employment).

Extraordinary Support Requirements

Disability ACT will not allocate new ISP funding beyond the maximum amount provided under Package 4. Where an individual requires a higher level of support than can be met with a Package 4 ISP, Disability ACT may elect to address the individuals' needs by block-funding the appropriate service, or a combination of block-funded and ISP funded services.

Decisions about resource allocation for extraordinary support requirements will be made on a person-by-person basis in consultation with the individual or their family/carer.

All applications for individuals with extraordinary support requirements must be accompanied by a written submission from a current or proposed agency to the Executive Director.

3 MANAGEMENT OF INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT PACKAGES

3.1 Guidelines for Expenditure of ISP Funds

ISP funding must at all times be used in a way that is financially responsible and accountable.

Disability ACT does not provide ISP funding as income. ISP's are funds provided by the ACT Government to meet the disability specific support needs of individuals. ISP funding enables these individuals and their families/carers to select supports that best meet their needs within the funding available to them and the purchasing parameters of this policy.

The ISP program has fixed resources and cannot always meet all of the costs and/or support needs of individuals, and their families and carers.

All ISP Expenditure must be justified against the purchasing parameters below. ISP expenditure may only occur outside of these parameters if the Executive Director of Disability ACT has granted a prior exemption (see below).

Purchasing parameters

In making decisions about expenditure of ISP funds, individuals, Auspice agencies, and Disability ACT must ensure that the following principles:

All expenditure of ISP funds must:

1. Be directly related to the person's disability support needs.
2. Be consistent with a planned approach to addressing their support needs.
3. Have the potential to minimise the impact of the person's disability, and to maximise the capacity, quality of life, and independence of the person, their families/carers.
4. Represent the most cost effective and relevant option to respond to the individual's identified needs.
5. Be reasonably justifiable in the public arena.

Items that do not meet these principles should not be purchased with ISP funds.

In addition, unless expenditure can be clearly justified against the above principles, ISP funding should not be used to purchase goods or services that:

- An individual could reasonably be expected to purchase if they did not have a disability.
- Replace goods and services the individual is eligible to access through other government or community sources.
- Are not described in the Commonwealth State Disability Services Agreement (CSTDA) with specific exceptions to equipment and aids, and in some instances transport in taxis (see below).

Examples of support items that would generally meet the purchasing parameters:
(examples are not exclusive)

- **Services that assist individuals to plan for the future, and coordinate support** (includes Auspice and coordination).
- **Support workers to help individuals in their home or in the community** (includes personal care, assistance with shopping, participation in sport and recreation).
- **Services that help individuals to live independently** (includes house cleaning, washing and ironing, food preparation).
- **Services that make homes more accessible** (includes home modifications, home maintenance, garden maintenance).
- **Services that maintain or strengthen the capacity of individuals** (includes physiotherapy, podiatry, speech therapy, occupational therapy).
- **Services that supports families and carers** (includes respite).
- **Disability specific aids and equipment** (see below).

Examples of support items that would not generally meet the purchasing parameters:

- household utilities such as electricity, gas, telephone and internet costs
- general household fittings, furniture and white goods
- standard electrical goods and consumer products
- food and other groceries
- rent
- vehicles and vehicle maintenance
- house and contents insurance, vehicle and life insurance
- tickets to movies, shows, or sporting events
- employment services
- fuel
- transport fares (see below)

Areas of Additional Consideration

Purchase of Equipment and Aids

ISP funding may be used to hire or purchase aids and equipment specific to a person's disability.

Although funding for equipment and aids is not recognised under the current CSTDA, the ACT Government recognises that equipment and aids play a vital role in supporting people who have disabilities to live with independence.

Wherever the equipment or aid is available through an existing scheme or service (such as the ACT Equipment Scheme) the individual must obtain the item through that scheme. However additional expenses required to obtain the item may be paid with ISP funds, i.e. client/user fees and charges or gaps between the funds available through the scheme and the cost of the item. Auspice agencies are responsible to ensure that use of funding for this purpose meets the purchasing parameters above.

Equipment and aids that are not available through an existing scheme or service may be purchased outright with ISP funds. Equipment purchased with ISP funding belongs to the purchasing agency/provider, not the individual. This enables the item to be returned to the agency when/if no longer required and then re-issued as appropriate. Agencies must maintain an asset register of all equipment purchased.

ISP's may also be used to pay for the maintenance costs of disability specific aids and equipment.

All agencies using ISP funds to obtain equipment and aids for people with disabilities must account for these purchases to DACT as required in by contract. Disability ACT may use these reports to advise the ACT Government and to inform discussion with other Government Departments about the cost and impact of disability in our community.

Taxi and transport fares

Transport fares are a cost that any individual could reasonably be expected to bear if they did not have a disability. The ACT Government addresses the additional transport needs of people with disabilities through the provision of accessible buses and the ACT Taxi Subsidy Scheme.

In circumstances where the individuals local transport needs are not addressed by these schemes, where the user cost represents a significant barrier to an individual's participation and inclusion into the community, and the expenditure meets the purchasing principles above, the auspice agency may expend ISP funds to meet the additional client cost of subsidised transport through the ACT Taxi Subsidy Scheme. This cost and the justification must be clearly itemised in the individual acquittal.

Fees and charges

An ISP may be used to meet the cost of fees and charges of other disability specific services. However, Auspice agencies are responsible to ensure that all components of the fee/charge meet the purchasing parameters above.

General example: a client contribution fee charged by a service providing in-home respite may be met by ISP funds; however a client fee for the cost of art materials, meals, or movie tickets may not be paid for with ISP funds.

Where a component of a fee/charge is outside of the purchasing parameters the ISP may not be used to pay for this component. Exemptions for exceptional circumstances may be requested (see below).

Using Individually Tied Funds interstate.

Where an individual travels out of the ACT but still resides in the Territory, ISP funds may be used to purchase goods and services that otherwise meet the purchasing parameters.

General example; obtaining personal care while on holiday does meet the purchasing parameters, while paying for hotel accommodation does not.

Exceptional Circumstances.

Where an individual has expenses directly related to their disability that do not meet the purchasing parameters, the Auspice agency may request an exemption.

Applying for an Exemption to the Purchasing Parameters.

Agencies may request an exemption from the purchasing parameters by writing to the Executive Director of Disability ACT. Requests for exemptions should:

- Provide detail of the circumstances behind the request.

- Demonstrate that all other options for addressing the support have been exhausted.
- Provide detail of where the support item meets and does not meet the purchasing parameters.
- Outline why the support should be approved.

Disability ACT will respond to requests for exemption within 12 business days of receiving the request in writing. Requesting an exemption does not guarantee that the Executive Director will grant the request.

3.2 The Funded Support Plan

The Funded Support Plan is an agreement between the ISP holder, their agency, and DACT for the services to be provided with ISP funding. All individuals receiving Packages 2,3 and 4 are required to complete a Funded Support Plan.

DACT will provide assistance to individuals to complete or change their Funded Support Plan (refer 3.3).

Where new funding is allocated through an application process, these services may not commence until DACT has approved the Funded Support Plan.

The Funded Support Plan:

- acts as an opportunity for open negotiation with the provider agency about support arrangements.
- represents a formal agreement about the support arrangements between the ISP recipient, the provider agency and DACT.
- identifies the hours and frequency of support, the base costs of support and any additional on-costs that may apply.
- provides a basis for DACT to contract the nominated provider agencies.
- classifies the support in terms of Commonwealth State and Territories Disability Agreement's National Minimum Data Set (CSTDA NMDS) classifications.

A Funded Support Plan may either be interim or final and may be renegotiated as required.

- **An Interim Plan** details arrangements for a specified period of time. Interim plans are often prepared when a person wishes to start a component of their support prior to other, usually more complex, arrangements being confirmed; when a person's arrangements are likely to change within a particular period; or when the negotiation of the Final Plan is not resolved within the agreed timeframe.
- **A Final Plan** details the person's intended ongoing support arrangements. Final Plans may be renegotiated as required.

The Funded Support Plan is an administrative agreement. It complements, but does not replace, the recommended, and more detailed Individual Planning process undertaken by the individual and an agency to identify the individual's medium and longer term goals, needed supports and day-to-day service provision.

DACT is required to report to the Australian and ACT Governments on services purchased with appropriated funds. Services detailed in the Funded Support Plan must be reported under the National Minimum Data Set.

DACT will monitor Funding Agreements with agencies and reserve the right to review services provided to individuals in relation to the Funded Support Plan.

DACT will retain the approved Funded Support Plans and maintain a database of all Funded Support Plan information. A copy of the signed Funded Support Plan will be sent to the individual and to their nominated Auspice agency.

Where an individual's support arrangements change, the individual may need to submit a revised or new support plan to DACT for approval. Some examples of when this will be required include:

- When individuals transfer from one service to another.
- When individuals change their funding mechanism.

The application of indexation will not require individuals to alter their funded support plans (refer 7.2).

3.3 Assistance in developing a Funded Support Plan

Individuals allocated Packages 2, 3 or 4, will be offered support from a facilitator to develop a Funded Support Plan. Individuals who are allocated package 1 - Individual Grants - are not required to complete a Funded Support Plan and will not be offered facilitation services.

Funded Support Plan facilitation is a short-term service that begins following notification of funding and ends with the approval of the Funded Support Plan. DACT provides a facilitation service and training to other agencies to facilitate the development of Funded Support Plans.

Individuals wishing assistance from a facilitator may contact DACT's Information Service on 6207-1086.

Individuals are not required to receive assistance from a facilitator in developing a Funded Support Plan. Individuals may complete a Funded Support Plan themselves or with assistance from another agency.

Individuals who do not wish assistance from a facilitator will be provided with a plan proforma, and information to assist them to complete the form. The Funded Support Plan must be returned to DACT for approval.

Role of the Facilitator

Facilitators will work with individuals, families, Auspice and provider agencies to ensure allocated funds are effectively used to obtain the required support services. Facilitators support individuals and families to:

- Develop and prioritise support goals within available funds;
- Select provider and Auspice agencies;
- Negotiate and cost the support with the agencies; and
- Develop a Funded Support Plan that formalises those arrangements.

The facilitator will recommend to the Executive Director the most appropriate funding mechanism for each support type in the Funded Support Plan i.e. either, Individualised Funding or Individually Tied Funding (refer 3.2). In making this recommendation, the Funded Support Plan facilitator will take into account a number of considerations, including:

- The individual's wishes;
- Existing support arrangements and resources;
- Possible resource duplication;
- The efficacy of the administrative arrangements; and
- Coordination and delivery of the support services.

Facilitators will assist individuals and families to plan how to use the ISP funds to best complement their existing supports and address the needs and goals identified in the funding application process.

Where an individual already has ISP funds and receives additional funding, the facilitator will support them to develop a Funded Support Plan for the total funding package.

Facilitators may assist by providing information about:

- Family and community supports;
- Generic and disability specific services and supports available;
- Alternative providers of similar supports;
- Territory programs – such as housing and accommodation, health and therapy services;
- Commonwealth programs – such as income support and child care;
- Skill development and training opportunities;
- Options for developing new sources of support;
- Examples of family support networks; and
- Alternative approaches to achieving independent living.
- Equipment, modifications and aids that might reduce the need for support or increase independence

Negotiation

Facilitators can support individuals and families to negotiate the required services with provider agencies. This may include:

- Contacting agencies and negotiating initial service requirements;
- Initial negotiation of the cost of the service if outside a standard price structure; and
- Convening meetings to enable the direct involvement of the individual in the final negotiation and agreement of service.

Redeveloping Funded Support Plans

The facilitators will provide support when an individual requires a new Funded Support Plan. This might occur if the individual wishes to:

- purchase an alternative type of service (within the parameters of their assessed funding allocation);
- change agencies (refer 6.2); or
- change their funding mechanism (refer 2.2)

Timeframes

DACT will endeavour to facilitate the development of Funded Support Plans within the following timeframes:

- Facilitators will make initial contact with the individual within seven working days of a referral from the Executive Director, or of a request to redevelop a plan from an individual.
- Facilitators will support the individual to submit a Funded Support Plan to the Executive Director of DACT no later than three months after they have been allocated funding.
- DACT will advise individuals and nominated agencies in writing of the Executive Director's approval or requirement to amend their Funded Support Plan, no later than 10 working days of the receipt of the Funded Support Plan.

3.4 Facilitation Training

To ensure consistency, DACT will provide free training for agencies wishing to offer a Funded Support Plan Facilitation service. The training will cover the key elements required to establish a Funded Support Plan and will be provided in the same year that there is an ISP funding round.

Agencies must have completed the facilitation training in order to offer this service.

3.5 Acquittal Processes

The ACT Government is responsible to ensure the funds allocated to support individuals are being used appropriately and to maximum effect.

The ACT Government is also responsible to ensure that its acquittal requirements are as efficient, relevant and simple as possible to minimise the impact on individuals and their families.

All ISP funds must be acquitted to Disability ACT consistent with the Funding Agreement between that agency and the department. Disability ACT will review its Funding Agreement requirements to ensure that Auspice agencies clearly account for ISP expenditure within the guidelines of this policy.

Individual Grants

Grants recipients must provide DACT with a one-page acquittal report at the end of the agreed funding term, outlining how the funds were spent. The receipts for goods or services purchased from the grant must be attached.

Individually Tied Funding

Acquittal to DACT

Individually Tied funding must be identified per individual in financial reports to DACT. The reports must be submitted to DACT in the format and within the timeframe specified in the Funding Agreement.

Disability ACT will require Auspice agencies to itemise ISP expenditure on support services and equipment, and confirm that the expenditure is consistent with the purchasing parameters and guidelines for expenditure (refer 3.1 above).

Auspice agencies will be required to demonstrate to Disability ACT that they have provided the ISP recipient with itemised accounts against their allocated funding quarterly.

Acquittal to individuals

The Auspice agency must provide quarterly statements to the individual allocated the ISP. Statements should include details of income and expenditure against the ISP, and any administration fees or coordination costs charged by the auspice agency.

The format of these quarterly statements is negotiated between the agency and the individual or if appropriate their family/carer.

Individualised funding

Acquittal to DACT

Individualised Funds are not separately acquitted; they are pooled together with any base funding that may be provided by Disability ACT for that service type and are acquitted as a total funding and total outputs for the service.

Acquittal reports must be submitted to the DACT in the format specified in the agency's Funding Agreement, within 30 days of 31 December and within 30 days of 30 June.

3.6 Return of Surplus Individually Tied Funds

All ISP funds allocated to individuals remain ACT Government monies until expended. Individually Tied funds that remain unexpended at the end of each financial year are considered to be **surplus funds** and are to be returned to DACT.

A surplus may occur in situations such as where:

- Services are unable to be supplied due to staff shortages;
- Funds not required to purchase the support as it has been obtained from an alternative source;

- An individual travels interstate or is hospitalised for a significant period of the year and did not require the supports identified; and/or
- The individual no longer requires the level of support funding provided.

In the acquittal process, agencies are required to identify expenditure for each Individually Tied arrangement.

Where an individual in consultation with the agency, believes it is necessary to carry surplus funds into the following year to cover existing commitments or to allow for contingencies, DACT will allow up to a maximum of 10% of an individual's total allocation to be carried forward.

Agencies are required to notify DACT of all surplus Individually Tied funds in acquittal statements by 30 July each year.

DACT recognises that there are some circumstances in which, the Auspice agency on the recipients behalf, may seek to accumulate a proportion greater than 10% of surplus funds for a particular purpose.

In these circumstances, individuals must submit a written request to the Executive Director of DACT detailing the amount and the reason for the request. Requests should be received by DACT by no later than 30 days of the end of the financial year.

The Executive Director of Disability ACT will notify the individual and the agency of the outcome of the request within 30 days of receipt of the request.

Where a surplus is identified, DACT will issue an invoice to the agency for the agreed surplus to be returned.

Where a agency is contracted for more than one Individually Tied Funding allocation, the surplus is to be calculated separately for each individually tied allocation i.e. sum of that individual's allocation, minus the total expenditure against that allocation.

All returned surplus funds are used by DACT to provide non-recurrent funding to other individuals and families requiring support.

3.7 Review of Individually Tied Funding Arrangements

DACT will conduct a review of each recurrent Individually Tied Funding Arrangements at least once every 5 years. Disability ACT will not routinely review non-recurrent funds, but reserves the right to do so.

Individuals will be notified in advance of their review date.

The primary purpose of a review is to determine whether the ISP funds continue to meet the support needs identified in the application or Funded Support Plan (refer 3.2).

Where no Funded Support Plan is available (eg. the ISP predates the Funded Support Plan process) a Funded Support Plan is to be developed during the review process.

A review is not a funding allocation process.

The review will note issues that may affect the individual's quality of life, or that represent a risk either to them or to others. Where a requirement for additional support is highlighted, either to meet the needs previously identified in an ISP application process, or because their needs have increased or changed:

- The individual may seek funding through a new ISP application round if funds have been made available for this purpose by the ACT Government,
- DACT may, in some circumstances, seek to address the individual's additional support needs, or components of the individual's support needs, by referring the individual to other programs or agencies,
- The review report will be included in DACT's data on unmet need and will assist inform the ACT Government's planning and budget processes.
- In some circumstances an emergency funding application may be required.

Where it is agreed that the ISP funds provided are surplus to the individual's need, the report will recommend recurrent or non-recurrent changes to the Individually Tied Funding allocated to the individual.

The review will also consider whether the funding mechanism/s supporting the individual (Individually Tied and individualised) continue to be effective in meeting the individual's support needs.

A review may be conducted within five years if requested by an individual, an agency, or if deemed necessary by DACT. Examples of circumstances that might prompt a review include:

- Individuals have experienced a major life transition;
- Individuals have a permanent change in their family or other informal support arrangements; and/or
- there is consistent surplus of ISP funds.

An assessor engaged by DACT will conduct all reviews. The assessor will take into account:

- The prior applications, assessment reports, and Funded Support Plans on file;
- The individual's current living circumstances;
- The current support arrangements of the individual, including paid and unpaid support;
- The individual's priorities in relation to support;
- Information and advice from family and community members and agencies as deemed appropriate by the individual and /or their guardian;
- Any other relevant assessment and reports; and
- Any options that may have not been considered and provide information believed useful to the individual.

The individual and their legal guardian (if appropriate) in receipt of the funding must meet with the assessor. The review should preferably take place in the individual's home because:

- applications for support generally relate to a person's living circumstances. Observing a person in their home environment enables the assessor to gain the best understanding of the individual's needs and supplement the information in the application; and
- questions in application forms are subject to interpretation. Part of the assessors' role is to clarify and confirm information in each individual's application to ensure uniformity in the information presented to the assessing panel.

The review report will be submitted to the Executive Director DACT. A copy will also be forwarded to the individual, their family/guardian, and the agency managing the Individually Tied funding allocation.

3.8 National Minimum Data Set (NMDS)

All community organisations funded by DACT are required to participate in the collection of nationally comparable data for the Commonwealth State Territory Disability Agreement: National Minimum Data Set (CSTDA NMDS).

The National Minimum Data Set (NMDS) gathers information about community and government CSTDA funded services, and about the people who use those services. This information is collated at a national level and provides a profile of all people receiving a CSTDA funded service in a financial year. This data is also used for planning national programs, evaluating and monitoring the achievements of program objectives as well as providing comparative information about services for people with a disability.

All information gathered through the NMDS data collection is encoded to ensure that individuals cannot be identified. The information is maintained in accordance with privacy and confidentiality principles including the *Privacy Act 1988*, the *Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000* and *CSTDA NMDS Privacy and Data Principles*.

To find out more about how the NMDS data is gathered and used visit the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare website on: [\](#)

4 APPLICATION PROCESS

DACT's ISP funding application process is intended to reflect transparent, equitable and defensible decision-making. The process is also intended to be as simple and least intrusive as possible, while providing the Application Panel with enough information with which to make a decision.

DACT makes every effort to assist people applying for support services. However, not all applications for ISPs will be successful, and those that are successful may not receive the level of service or resources they request. In such circumstances, DACT will recommend alternatives to funded support wherever possible.

4.1 Application process — a quick guide

Following notification of an ISP funding round, the typical process for ISP funding has the following steps:

1. Disability ACT advertises that the funds are available.
2. Application forms are submitted to DACT within the advertised timeframe.
3. An application panel reads all applications.
4. The panel considers all applications against the eligibility, target group, and Assessment Criteria. Applications are ranked in priority order, and the panel draws a shortlist of application for assessment.
5. Applicants are advised either that their application has been unsuccessful, or that they have been short-listed for the next stage of the application process. Unsuccessful applicants are advised of the Appeals Process.
6. Subject to clearing any appeals lodged in the first stage of the process, short-listed applicants meet with an assessor to review their application. The assessors write a report for the panel.
7. The panel considers the assessment report and determines final ranking of applications.
8. The panel develops a report for the Executive Director recommending allocation of funding against the available budget.
9. The Executive Director allocates funding informed by the panel's recommendations.
10. Applicants are advised whether or not their application has been successful. Successful applicants are invited to meet with a facilitator to complete a Funded Support Plan prior to funds being allocated.

Note: for Package 1 funding (Individual Grants), DACT may elect to use a shorter application process. This shortened process may not require the use of an assessor (step 6).

4.2 Promotion of ISP Funding Rounds

DACT will advertise an ISP application process through a variety of media including:

- **Print and Broadcast Media**
DACT will advertise in local newspapers and on radio stations
- **DHCS website**
DACT will publish a notice on our web page www.dhcs.act.gov.au/disabilityact
- **Email advice**
Emails will be sent to disability service agencies and to people who have registered their contact details with DACT.
- **Post**
Letters will be sent to people who have requested to be notified by post of ISP funding rounds.
- **Information sessions**
DACT will hold public presentations that will explain the funding process and application forms.

Individuals wishing to register their contact details with DACT may do so by clicking on the link on the DACT website www.dhcs.act.gov.au/disabilityact or by contact the Information Service on 6207 1086.

DACT does not have the capacity to monitor whether addresses have changed or are incorrect. It is the responsibility of each individual registering their contact details with DACT to ensure contact details are current and correct.

4.3 Application Forms and Information packs

Disability ACT publishes an Application Form and Information Pack with each advertised application process.

The Information Packs will detail the purpose of the funding, the eligibility, target group and assessment criteria, and other information relevant to the application. It is recommended that all applicants carefully read the Information Pack before they complete the Application Form.

Application Forms and Information Packs will be available on DACT's webpage (http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au/disability_act) from the date the ISP Application Process is advertised.

Application Forms and Information Packs may also be requested by contacting DACT's Information Service. Application packs requested through the Information Service will be mailed out within three working days of contact.

DACT requires a separate Application Form to be completed for each applicant. Previous applications will not be accepted; a new application must be submitted for each process.

The application period will be a minimum of six weeks unless otherwise notified.

Applicants (the person requesting disability support services) must sign the application form. If an Applicant is unable to legally consent to their application, the applicant's parent or legal guardian must sign on their behalf.

If an applicant wishes someone other than himself or herself to be the contact person for their application, they must nominate a preferred contact.

Applicants may complete applications independently or with the assistance of another party (eg. a family member or an agency).

Completed applications must be returned to DACT by the closing date. DACT will only accept late applications where the application has been postmarked on or before the closing date, and where the application is received within five days of the closing date.

Faxed applications will be accepted on or before the closing date only if the original signed application is received by DACT within five days of the closing date.

DACT will acknowledge receipt of all applications by mail.

DACT respects the right to privacy and the personal nature of the information requested of families, carers and individuals. All information received will be treated in accordance with the *Privacy Act 1988* and the *Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000*.

All applications forms will include consent for release of information. Information provided to DACT in an application will be used to assess, rate, and rank the application.

Information collated from the application process may be used to provide advice the ACT Government on the allocation of, and demand for, disability services. Individual details will not be provided in any collated information.

The contact details provided in an application will be used to contact the applicant and/or nominated contact persons about their application and any funding subsequently provided through the application process.

DACT may also request an applicant's permission to use their information for other purposes. The reasons for this request will be explained in the Information Package.

4.4 Eligibility

The Application Panel will review all applications for eligibility. All applications must meet the following minimum eligibility criteria:

- **The Applicant has a disability as defined under the *ACT Disability Services Act 1991* and the Commonwealth, State/Territory Disability Agreement:**

The person must have a disability that is attributable to an intellectual, cognitive, neurological, sensory, psychiatric or physical impairment, or a combination of these impairments. The person with a disability will need support due to a substantive reduction of their capacity for communication, social interaction, learning or mobility. The disability is permanent or likely to be permanent and may be of a chronic episodic nature.

- **The Applicant is a current resident of the ACT.**

The applicant must be living in the ACT for a period of six months or more and can verify residency upon request by producing utility notices, lease agreement, mortgage papers or other such documents which support residency for the specified period.

People who are not current residents, but have recently moved or intend to move to the ACT, under Interstate-Portability arrangements may also apply for ISP funding (refer 6.1).

Interruptions to ACT residency not exceeding 24 months may still be considered as meeting the residency criterion, provided that:

- The applicant can clearly establish that the ACT remains his/her permanent place of residence; and
- The absence is due to the necessity to access rehabilitation or specific supports that are not available in the ACT; and
- Supporting documentation is available upon request.

Compensable clients are eligible to apply for, and receive, ISP funding provided they otherwise meet the eligibility criteria.

For the purposes of this policy, a compensable client is defined as an individual who has received, expects to receive, is actively seeking, or in the view of the Department should seek, compensation to cover the cost of care or support as a result of an accident, injury or illness.

Disability ACT is developing further policy on the allocation and recovery of funds to compensable clients.

DACT reserves the right to apply additional eligibility requirements for specific funding purposes as required.

4.5 The Application Panel

The role of the application panel is to consider and rank all applications against the eligibility and assessment criteria, and make recommendations for funding to the Executive Director.

The panel is appointed by the Executive Director, and will have broad representation in expertise and experience, and may include people with a disability, parents, siblings, carers or other family members, agency staff, staff of DACT, and/or staff from other government agencies.

The application panel will abide by the Bowen Declaration Code of Conduct. In accord with the Bowen Declaration panel members must declare any potential areas of conflict. If potential conflict is identified, the individual member may either withdraw from any decision making for a particular applicant or withdraw from the application panel.

The application panel will:

- (i) Read all applications and identify eligible applications;
- (ii) Assess and rank eligible applications against the target group, and assessment criteria;
- (iii) Where required, seek information from applicants, from applicant interviews with an assessor, or other sources;
- (iv) Rank eligible applications in priority order;
- (v) Recommend individual funding allocations according to the priority ranking, the assessed need, and within available funds;
- (vi) Ensure that all recommendations are fair and transparent; and
- (vii) Ensure that the recommended funding is for services and supports that will:
 - (a) *Minimise the effects of the disability and maximise independence through the provision of timely and appropriate supports, and;*
 - (b) *Make a substantial difference to the quality of life for an individual; and*
 - (c) *Strengthen and support family members in their roles as mothers, fathers, siblings, partners and carers.*

4.6 The Rating and Short-listing Process

The application panel brings a variety of perspectives and experiences to assess and rate each application. The rating score is based on the collective consideration and judgement of the panel, guided by the rating process.

Based on the information available to them, the panel members will consider the person with a disability, their family, their carers and their community holistically and form a judgement on this basis.

DACT Eligibility Pre-checks

Where there is a large volume of applications, DACT may pre-check all applications for eligibility before forwarding them to the application panel.

The Chair of the application panel will remove applications from further consideration, where the pre-check indicates they clearly do not fulfil the eligibility criteria.

Where the eligibility cannot be clearly substantiated in the pre-check process, the application will be submitted to the panel for assessment.

Individual assessments

At least two panel members will read each application. Each of these panel members will individually assess the application against the eligibility priority and assessment criteria and determine a priority rating.

Where an applicant applies for more than one item or package of support, the panel may score each item/package separately.

The rating process calls for a judgement by the application panel on three elements:

- Rating of the level of risk in the person's circumstances, within the next 12 months;
- Rating of the impact of funding on this risk; and
- Ratings of improvement in the quality of life of the person with a disability if the funds applied for are provided.

In rating the application, panel members will assess the applications against the following criteria (broadly described as 'assessment criteria'):

1) Current risk factors

- (a) Any critical risk factors present in the person's life, and whether the risk is currently evident, likely to apply in the next 6-12 months or is likely to occur in the next three years.
- (b) The current supports and services in the person's life and consideration as to whether these supports:
 - Fully off-set the risk (F)
 - Partially off-set the risk (P)
 - Have no impact on the risk (N)
- (c) An overall assessment of the risk in the applicant's life.

2) Effectiveness of support on the Applicant's risk factors

- (d) The extent to which the support the applicant has requested will impact on the risk rating.

3) Effectiveness of support on the Applicant's quality of life

- (e) The extent to which the supports the applicant has requested will affect the quality of life of the person by minimising the effects of the disability and maximising their independence.
- (f) Note whether providing the funded support requested would impact on:
 - Community presence
 - Competency
 - Choice
 - Respect
 - Community participation
 - Strengthening the capacity of carers
- (g) Provide an overall rating of the impact of funding on the quality of life of the individual, including their family where relevant.

The panel may contact the applicant or their nominated contact person to clarify the information in the application that is unclear.

Developing a Panel Score

Once panel members have completed their individual assessments, the panel members will confer and determine an agreed Panel Score for each application. Where disparity exists, the panel members will together review the elements of the application that lead to their individual assessment scores.

If the panel members reviewing an application are unable to agree on the panel score, the application will be discussed with other members of the panel.

If consensus is still not achieved the application panel will submit their individual rankings and an average will be taken, the average score will then be the Applicants Panel Score.

Determining Priority Order For Packages, and Developing A Shortlist For Assessment

Applications will then be ranked in priority order. The priority order for applications varies according to the type of package applied for (refer 2.7).

For Package 1 and Package 2

- the rating of improvement in quality of life as a result of funding will be the primary decision point. Where more than one application is given the same rating, a further priority will be considered based on the risk and the impact of funding on the risk.

For Packages 3 and 4

- the risk rating will be the primary consideration with the rating of the impact of funding on the risk as a secondary condition and consideration of the quality of life factors as the third consideration.

The panel will check the priority list to ensure there has been consistency and equity in the ranking of applicant scores.

For Package 1 applications, the panel now moves on to the Recommendation process (refers 4.8).

For Packages 2, 3 and 4 applications the panel may draw a shortlist of the highest priority applications. Applications that are included in the shortlist will be referred for a face-to-face meeting with an assessor. Applications that are not included in the shortlist are unsuccessful. All applicants are informed in writing of the outcome of the short-listing process and appeals process.

4.7 Meetings with an Assessor (Packages 2, 3 and 4 only)

Assessors are engaged by DACT to meet with applicants and to review the applications with the applicant. Assessors provide a written report to the panel detailing the outcome of their assessment meeting.

During the meeting with the applicant, the assessor will:

- Verify the information provided in the application;
- Clarify their current formal and informal support;
- Review the applicant's support needs;
- Clarify the applicant's priorities in relation to support; and
- Explore options that may have not been considered and provide information potentially useful to the applicant.

Assessors may either be members of DACT staff, or members of community agencies. Assessors are not members of the panel. Disability ACT will provide assessors with training and supervision in their assessment role.

Assessors must abide by the Bowen Declaration Code of Conduct. In accord with the Bowen Declaration assessors must declare any relationships with applicants that would constitute a potential or perceived conflict of interest. If a conflict is identified, the assessor may not conduct an assessment with that individual.

Assessors will contact short-listed applicants to arrange a suitable time and date for an assessment meeting. Where a nominated contact person has been identified in the application the assessor will contact that person instead of the applicant.

Applicants must be present for the assessment meeting. The meeting should preferably occur in the applicant's own home.

The applicant is welcome to invite other parties to the assessment meeting either to support them or to add value to the assessment process. Where DACT has advertised the availability of more than one type of package (eg: DACT may advertise that Packages 2 and 3 are available) the assessor will also recommend which package/s may best suit the applicant's needs.

The assessor will draft a report making recommendations for support to the Application Panel, and providing reasons for their recommendations. The assessor will provide a copy of the report to the applicant. Where the assessor's recommendations differ from those requested by the applicant, the assessor will explain their recommendations to the applicant.

4.8 Individual Funding Recommendations

For Packages 2, 3 and 4, the panel will consider the additional information contained in the assessment reports, and determine whether the initial rating should be revised. Should the panel revise the rating, a new panel score will be applied to the application.

The panel will consider the available funding for each package type and recommend how the funds are to be allocated according to the priority order for each funding package.

The panel's recommendations will indicate:

- Those individuals for whom funding has been recommended, the purpose of that funding, and the amount of funding to be offered; and
- Those individuals for whom funding has not been recommended.

Where the panel recommends that funding be allocated to an applicant, the panel may recommend funding for all the items/types of support requested, or for a portion of the support requested. The panel may also recommend funding for item/types of support not requested by the applicant.

Where the panel does not that recommend funding is allocated to an applicant, if possible, the panel may recommend alternative options for the applicant to consider.

The panel will formalise its recommendations in a report to the Executive Director of DACT. All application panel members are signatories to the report.

4.9 Approval

The Executive Director of DACT is delegated to approve allocation of ISP funds. The Executive Director will consider the recommendations of the Assessment Panel in determining individual funding allocations. In reviewing the panel's recommendations, the Executive Director will consider whether the recommendations:

- Are within available funds;
- Reflect transparent, equitable, and defensible decision-making; and
- Were derived using processes that accord with DACT's policies and procedures.

The Executive Director then allocates funding to individuals informed by the recommendations of the panel.

4.10 Notification

DACT will notify all applicants of the outcome of their application within 3 months of the closing date for applications.

For applicants who are allocated ISP funding, DACT will:

- Inform them in writing of the outcome; and
- Advise them of the next steps: i.e. that they are to complete a Funded Support Plan, and may receive assistance from a facilitator to do so.

For those applicants who are not allocated ISP funding DACT will:

- Inform them in writing of the outcome;
- Advise them of the reasons why their application was not successful;
- Inform them of the grievance/appeals process;
- Provide them with information of any alternative sources of support that the panel or assessor may recommend; and
- Collate their information into a database on unmet need.

4.11 Grievance/Appeals Processes

This section is released subject to further advice from the ACT Government Solicitors Office regarding

- *processes for complains related to current ISP management*
- *process for complaint and / or appeal for new applicants*

ISP recipients may lodge a complaint with DACT if they do not think a process was fair and equitable. Complaints should be addressed through DACT's Information Service on (02) 6207-1086, by email on disabilityACT@act.gov.au or by post at the following address:

*Disability ACT
Information Service
GPO Box 158
CANBERRA CITY ACT 2601*

The complaint will be addressed within the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services' Complaints Framework.

The complaint may also be raised with the Consumer Advocacy and Quality service within the Department of Disability, Housing & Community Services on (02) 132281. An online Client Feedback form may be downloaded from the Complaints and Advocacy page on the Department's website www.dhcs.act.gov.au

*Applicants may also seek to raise their complaint with an external merit review body. A list of ACT and Commonwealth bodies and contact details is found at **Appendix B**.*

5. EMERGENCY SUPPORT

Disability ACT recognises that people with disabilities at extreme or very high risk may, from time to time, require funding for emergency support.

The ACT Government does not allocate recurrent funding for emergency support. Disability ACT draws emergency support funding, from identified surpluses in Individually Tied funding arrangements or from surpluses against contracts with community agencies.

Individuals may only be allocated emergency funding for a period of up to a maximum of six months.

Emergency funding is not a first response crisis service. Emergency funding is only provided where all other avenues of support have been exhausted, and where the person continues to have serious and essential health/wellbeing issues requiring support.

Emergency funding is only available for support that will reduce the immediate risk to the person's health and wellbeing.

Individuals (or families/legal guardians) seeking emergency funding must submit a written request to the Executive Director of DACT. The request must state:

- The nature of the current support crisis,
- The person's current living circumstances,
- The formal and informal supports currently used, and
- Any gaps in essential support arrangements.

The Executive Director will consider all applications for emergency support against the criteria outlined below.

5.1 Eligibility Criteria for Emergency Support

A person is eligible to apply for emergency support if they meet the following criteria:

- A) The person seeking funds has a disability as defined under the *Disability Services Act 1991* (ACT) and the Commonwealth State Territory Disability Agreement:

The person must have a disability that is attributable to an intellectual, cognitive, neurological, sensory, psychiatric or physical impairment, or a combination of these impairments. The person with a disability will need support due to a substantive reduction of their capacity for communication, social interaction, learning or mobility. The disability is permanent or likely to be permanent and may be of a chronic episodic nature.

- B) The person is a current resident of the ACT:

The Applicant must be living in the ACT for a period of six months and can verify residency upon request by producing utility notices, lease agreement, mortgage papers or other such documents which support residency for the specified period.

Interruptions to ACT residency of up to 24 months shall be considered as meeting residency criterion provided that:

- The Applicant can clearly establish that the ACT remains his/her permanent place of residence; and
 - The absence is due to the necessity to access rehabilitation or specific supports that are not available in the ACT; and
 - Supporting documentation is available upon request.
- C) The risk is not primarily due to a psychiatric disability or medical condition as ACT Health administers these areas.

5.2 Risk Factors Addressed by Emergency Support

DACT will consider all requests for emergency funding against the following risk factors:

Essential Risk Factors

1. The person's support arrangements have broken down and/or unsustainable interim/temporary arrangements are in place; and
2. All other avenues of support have been explored and exhausted.

Other Risk Factors

3. The person has serious health/well-being issues requiring essential support; **and/or**
4. The environment is abusive or fails to provide for basic needs; **and/or**
5. The person is homeless and/or without supports such that there is an immediate threat to the life of the person.

5.3 Decision Making Process

The Executive Director will consider all written applications against the eligibility and identified risk factors.

All Emergency Funding Applications must provide evidence that:

- All Eligibility Criteria are met (A, B, & C), and;
- Both Essential Risk Factors 1 and 2 are present and;
- At least one of the Other Risk Factors, 3, 4 and 5 are present.

DACT will respond within 7 working days of receipt of a request for emergency support. Where the request is not deemed to meet the criteria DACT will advise the applicant of the reason, and where possible will provide information on alternate options.

Where a request is deemed to meet the eligibility criteria, and the required risk factors are evident DACT will authorise a needs assessment to be conducted.

An assessor will contact the individual or their nominated contact person to make an appointment for a meeting preferably in the person's own home.

During the meeting the assessor will:

- Verify the information supplied in individual's letter;
- Clarify their current formal and informal support;
- Identify the individual's support needs utilising a daily/weekly planner;
- Clarify the individual's preferences and priorities in relation to support;
- Explore any options that may have not been considered and provide information believed useful to the individual.

The assessor will provide an assessment report against the eligibility criteria, risk factors, and available funding to the Executive Director including recommendations and the reasons for them.

The Executive Director will consider the recommendations and will either approve or not approve the request. If the Executive Director does not approve the request, the applicant will be advised of the reason, and where possible, provided with information on alternate options will be provided.

If the Executive Director approves the requested emergency support, DACT will notify the applicant, or a nominated contact person, and (if appropriate) a nominated service agency advising them the outcome and requesting the completion of a Funded Support Plan.

DACT will then make the necessary contractual arrangements to fund the agency identified in the Funded Support Plan.

DACT respects the right to privacy and the personal nature of the information requested of families, carers and individuals. All information received will be treated in accordance with the *Privacy Act 1988* and the *Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000*.

Information provided to DACT in an emergency support request will be used by DACT to assess eligibility of the individual for emergency support, and the risk factors present in their life.

Information from emergency funding applications may also be used to provide advice to members of the ACT Government about the support needs of the individual.

The contact details provided in an emergency funding request will be used to contact the individual and/or nominated contact persons about their request, and about any funding subsequently provided.

DACT will not use information in an application for other purposes without the applicant's (or if applicable, their parent/legal guardian's) consent.

5.4 Limitations of Emergency Funding

Funding for emergency support may either be Individually Tied or Individualised. Emergency funding is only to be used for essential support necessary to reduce the identified immediate risks to the applicant.

Emergency funding must only be used for support items that meet the Guidelines for use of ISP funds (refer 3.1).

5.5 Review

As a condition of accessing emergency support, recipients must agree to a review of their circumstances before the expiry of the six-month period.

The purpose of this review is to gauge the effectiveness of the emergency support and to ensure alternative options have been sought.

Individuals may not accumulate surplus funds in an emergency period. Surplus funds must be returned to DACT.

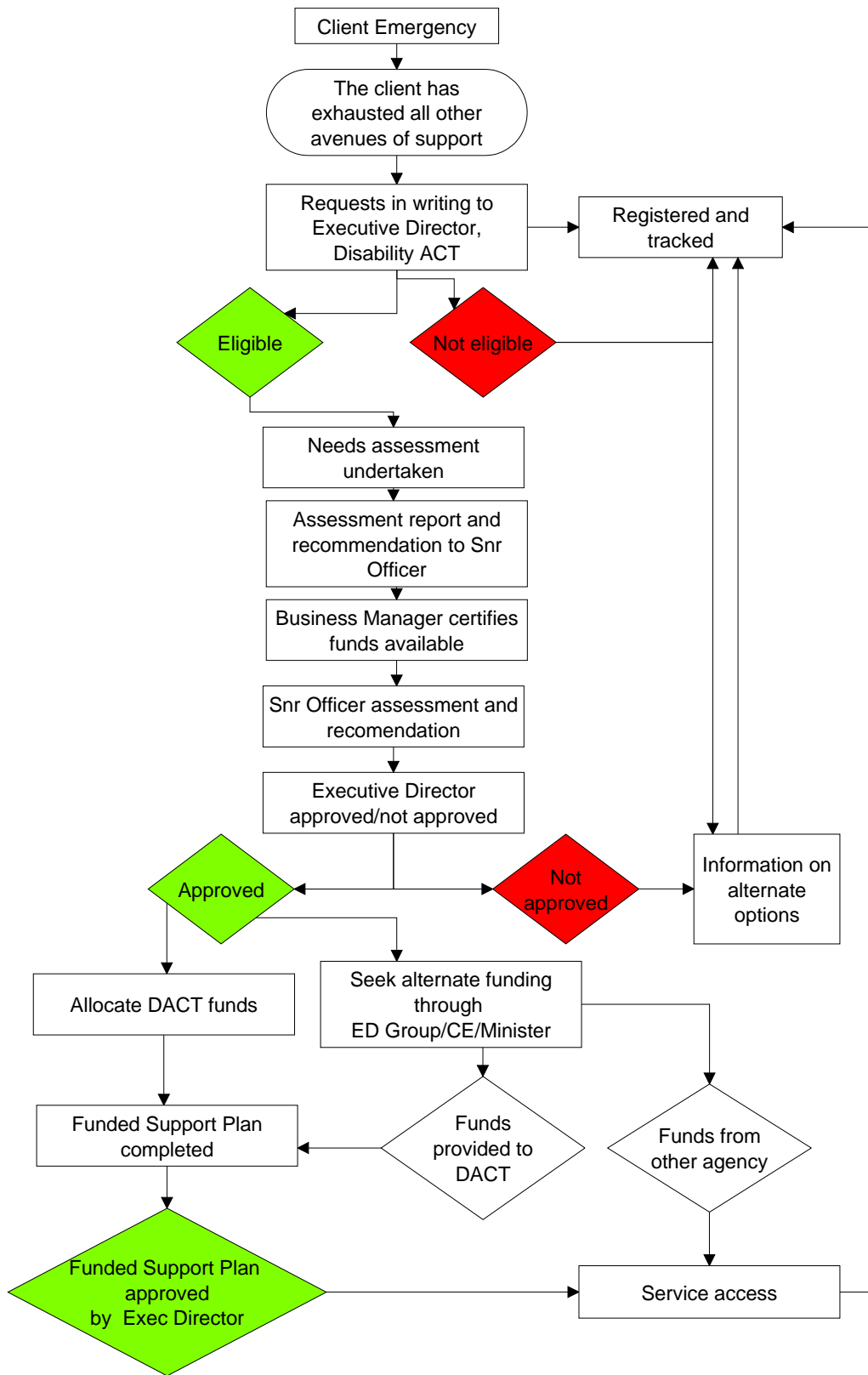
5.6 Timeframes

DACT will endeavour to respond to all emergency support applications within 29 working days, as follows:

- DACT will provide an initial response to an emergency funding application within 7 working days of the receipt of the written request.
- Where the Executive Director refers the application to an assessor, the assessor will contact the applicant within 3 working days of the Executive Director's referral.
- The assessor will then meet with the applicant within 10 working days of the referral.
- The assessor will provide the assessment to the designated senior officer within 5 working days of the assessment meeting.
- The designated senior officer will make recommendations to the Executive Director of DACT within 3 working days of receiving the assessment report.
- The designated senior officer will provide a written response to the applicant within 3 working days of receiving the Executive Director's response.

Flowchart for Emergency Funding Requests.

The following flowchart demonstrates the pathways that must be followed in relation to emergency funding request.



6 Portability —when an Individual Relocates

Two types of portability are considered by this policy: inter-state and inter-service.

6.1 Inter-State Portability

Interstate portability may be considered when a person with ISP funding makes a sudden and unplanned move either to, or from, the ACT. Under such circumstances it may be possible for that individual to continue to receive existing ISP funding for a limited period (generally up to 12 months).

To commence inter-state portability procedures, or request information on current portability arrangements, please contact DACT's Information Service on 6207 1086.

6.2 Inter-Service Portability

Inter-service portability occurs where an individual with an ISP changes from one agency to another within the ACT.

All individuals allocated ISP funding select their preferred auspice agency or provider agency, and may subsequently change to another agency.

To change auspice agency or provider agency, the individual must notify the DACT in writing of their intention to change. If known, the individual must nominate the new preferred agency. The individual is encouraged, but not required, to provide a reason for this change.

The Executive Director will refer the notification to a Funded Support Plan facilitator. The facilitator will support the individual to implement the new service arrangements.

This will involve:

- Advising the current agency of the request.
- Selecting and negotiating services with a new agency.
- Setting a date to exit the current service, and a date to commence with the new service.
- Determining the amount of funding to be recurrently transferred to the new agency, and the pro-rata amount of funding to be transferred in the current year.
- Developing a Funded Support Plan for these arrangements.

Implementing the new support arrangements may also involve:

- Undertaking a needs assessment.

Upon finalising these arrangements the facilitator will forward the new Funded Support Plan to the Executive Director.

Following approval, DACT will notify both the individual and any support agencies of the outcome. DACT will make the necessary contractual arrangements to transfer funding to the new brokerage/provider agency.

Elements considered in Inter-service Portability

In supporting the individual to negotiate a change of agency the facilitator must take the following elements into consideration:

A: Client Risk

In circumstances where the health or wellbeing of the client is at risk in their current support arrangements, DACT will take all measures to ensure that the risk is reduced; this may involve one or more of the following options:

- The establishment of temporary arrangements with the current agency to minimise the risk until such time as portability arrangements may be effected;
- Establishing interim arrangements with another agency until such time as portability arrangements may be effected;
- Rapidly establishing support arrangements with a new agency.

B: Timeframe

In circumstances where the client is not at risk, a reasonable period of time must be provided to enable the current agency to adjust their support arrangements and/or to enable the new agency to establish, develop and implement the new support arrangements.

The timeframe for inter-service portability must be acceptable to all parties to ensure appropriate administration tasks have been undertaken and allow for a smooth transition with minimal disruption to the client, or to either agency.

In circumstances where the existing or new service arrangement does not involve shared resources or long-term contracts (this is often the case where the individual has Individually Tied funds) DACT considers it reasonable that the transfer may occur within 30 working days.

In circumstances where the existing or new service arrangements do involve shared resources (eg: group housing, centre based daytime services) and where service viability is not jeopardised, DACT considers it reasonable that the transfer may occur within 6 months.

In the event that the transfer is delayed due to service constraints, every effort should be made to accommodate an individual's choice and resolve any issues promptly.

C: Assessment of Need

Where a person is allocated Individualised Funding, and where the existing support arrangements involve shared resources, the individual may be required to undertake an assessment of need.

The assessment will advise DACT of the optimal level of support for the individual in the new service arrangement. An assessment does not guarantee additional funding to cover the cost of the recommended level of support.

D: Service Viability

The ongoing viability of the agency or the service option the individual is transferring from must be considered when assessing a portability request.

Consideration must be given to the possible impact on clients remaining in the service the individual has chosen to leave such as:

- The financial impact of the transfer.
- Consequential impacts, such as the viability of the agency retaining support staff to provide services
- The viability of the service option; and
- The estimated length of time before the individual could be replaced in a shared support arrangement.

DACT will not incur additional recurrent costs as a result a client changing agencies.

E: Complaints

Where the request occurs as a result of dispute or concern about an agency, DACT encourages individuals to consider resolving their concerns within the agency's standard complaints processes prior to seeking to change agency.

Alternatively, the issue may be treated under DACT's complaints process. To refer the issue to DACT, please contact DACT's Information Service on 6207-1086. An Online Client Feedback form may be downloaded from the Complaints and Advocacy page on the Department's website www.dhcs.act.gov.au.

7 Administration

7.1 Payment Processes

Individually Tied and Individualised funding

DACT's Funding Agreement for each agency specifies the funding amount.

Payments against the Agreement are generally made quarterly in advance. Alternative arrangements (eg: lump sum payments) can be negotiated on an individual basis.

Individual Grants.

Individual grants are paid by DACT to each individual either by electronic funds transfer (EFT) or by cheque. This will occur within 30 days of DACT receiving a completed *Grants Acceptance Form* and if required, a *Statement by a Supplier* form, from the individual.

Individual Grants may also be paid to a nominated agency at an individual's request.

7.2 Indexation

Indexation of recurrent ISP funds will be passed on at a rate determined by ACT Treasury each financial year.

7.3 Privacy and Confidentiality

The Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services aims to ensure that the personal privacy of individuals is protected, and that access to records is provided in compliance with relevant legislation.

One of the activities undertaken by the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services is the collection, protection and/or release of certain personal information of its clients, contractors and employees.

The *Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988* gives rights to individuals in relation to how information is handled by Australian and ACT Government agencies. ACT Government agencies must comply with the 11 information policy principles set out in Section 14 of the *Privacy Act*.

“Personal information” is any information or opinion about an individual whose identity is apparent, or can be reasonably ascertained, from the information or opinion.

For further information, please refer to the *Privacy Act 1988*, *Health Records (Privacy and Access) Act 1997*.

Appendix A: Current Package Funding Limits.

The following funding allocation limits apply to ISP packages detailed in **Policy 2.6**

Package 1: Individual grants.

The Minimum Level of funding that may be allocated: **\$500**
The Maximum level of funding that may be allocated: **\$5,000**

Package 2: Small Transition Support Allocations.

The Maximum level of funding that may be allocated per year: **\$10,000**
The Maximum level of funding that may be allocated over 3 years: **\$30,000**

Package 3: Low to Moderate Sustained Support

The Maximum level of funding that may be allocated: **\$40,000**

Package 4: High and Sustained Support

The Minimum Level of funding that may be allocated: **\$40,000**
The Maximum level of funding that may be allocated: **\$125,000**

Appendix B: Merits Review Bodies

B1: ACT Merits Review Bodies

ACT Auditor General (AG)

The AG acts independently of the Government. The AG's functions are set out in the *Auditor-General Act 1996* and the *Financial Management Act 1996*.

The AG undertakes audits of management performance and the financial statements of public sector bodies.

The aim of the AG is to improve public sector management and accountability by:

- ensuring the Legislative Assembly and the electorate are provided with accurate and useful information about the management of public sector resources and;
- providing independent advice and recommendations for improving the management of public resources.

The AG can also receive and investigate Public Interest Disclosures along with the Ombudsman and Attorney General.

Postal Address: PO Box 275, Civic Square, ACT, 2608

Physical Address: Level 4, 11 Moore St, Canberra City, ACT 2601

Business Hours: 8:30am-5:00pm Monday to Friday

Ph: 02 6207 0833; Fax: 02 6207 0826

Email: actauditorgeneral@act.gov.au;

Web: <http://www.audit.act.gov.au/index.shtml>

ACT Human Rights Commission

(Including the Disability & Community Services Commissioner)

The Commission brings together the existing functions of the ACT Human Rights Office and the Community and Health Services Complaints Commissioner into a new agency for promoting rights and resolving complaints.

The Commission is an independent agency established by the Human Rights Commission Act 2005 to provide a fair and accessible process for dealing with complaints about:

- discrimination;
- health services;
- disability services;
- services for older people;
- community services; and
- services for children and young people

As well, the Commission will facilitate service improvement and develop awareness in government, and the community, of human rights. The Commission also has specific functions under the Discrimination Act 1991, the Human Rights Act 2004, the Health Records (Privacy and Access) Act 1997 and the Health Professionals Act 2005.

Postal Address: GPO Box 158 Canberra ACT 2601

Physical Address: Level 2, 12 Moore Street Canberra ACT 2600

Business Hours: 8:30am-5:00pm Monday to Friday

Ph: 02 6205 2222; Fax: 02 6207 1034

Email: human.rights@act.gov.au

Web : <http://www.hro.act.gov.au/index.html>

Office of the Public Advocate (ACT)

Promotes and individually represents the rights and interests of people who are not able to represent or protect themselves including Children and young people, adults with a mental illness or impaired decision making ability who require protection from abuse, exploitation or neglect.

Postal Address: PO Box 1001, Civic Square, ACT, 2608

Physical Address: 3rd Floor, CFM Building, 12 Moore St, Canberra City

Enquiries service: Ph 6207 0707 8.45am to 4.45pm, Monday to Friday

Fax: 6207 0688; Email: oca@act.gov.au

Web: <http://www.oca.act.gov.au/index.html>

Children and Young People Official Visitor

The purpose of the Official Visitor is to monitor the wellbeing and provide independent protection and promotion of the individual human rights of children and young people in institutions, shelters and facilities providing therapeutic protection in the ACT.

Postal Address: PO Box 198, LYNEHAM, ACT 2602

Email: officialvisitor@yahoo.com

ACT Ombudsman

Investigates complaints from people who believe they have been treated unfairly or unreasonably by an ACT Government department or agency.

The Ombudsman can also receive and investigate Public Interest Disclosures along with the Auditor General and Attorney General.

Postal Address: GPO Box 442, Canberra ACT 2601

Physical Address: Ground Floor, 1 Farrell Place Canberra City

Ph: 02 6276 0111; Fax: 02 6249 7829

Complaints hotline: 1300 362 072 (local call charge) Enquiries 9 am - 5 pm Monday to Friday

Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au

Web: <http://act.ombudsman.gov.au/>

[ACT Administrative Appeals Tribunal](#)

[ACT Discrimination Tribunal](#)

[ACT Guardianship and Management of Property Tribunal](#)

[Mental Health Tribunal](#)

[Residential Tenancies Tribunal](#)

<http://www.courts.act.gov.au/magistrates/index.html>

B2: Commonwealth Merits Review bodies

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission

HREOC resolves complaints of discrimination or breaches of human rights under federal laws.

Level 8, Piccadilly Tower

133 Castlereagh St

Sydney NSW 2000

Ph: 02 9284 9600; TTY: 1800 620241; Fax: 02 9284 9611; Complaints infoline: 1300 656 419; Privacy Hotline: 1300 363 992; Email:

complaintinfo@humanrights.gov.au; Website: www.hreoc.gov.au

Commonwealth Ombudsman

Investigates complaints from people who believe they have been treated unfairly or unreasonably by a Commonwealth Government department or agency, including nursing homes and hostels.

Postal Address: GPO Box 442, Canberra ACT 2601

Physical Address: Ground Floor, 1 Farrell Place Canberra City

Ph: 02 6276 0111; Fax: 02 6249 7829; Complaints hotline: 1300 362 072 (local call charge) Enquiries 9 am - 5 pm Monday to Friday

Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au; Web: <http://www.comb.gov.au/>

Commonwealth and ACT Government Privacy Commissioner

The Commissioner provides protection for:

- Personal information about you that is handled by federal and ACT government agencies;
- Personal information about you held by all large private sector organisations, all private sector health service providers and some small businesses;
- Credit worthiness information held by credit reporting agencies and credit providers; and
- Personal tax file numbers used by individuals and organisations.

Ph: 1300 363 992 (local call cost); TTY: 1800 620 24;1 Fax: 02 9284 9666

Postal Address: GPO Box 5218, Sydney, NSW 2001

Email: privacy@privacy.gov.au; Web: <http://www.privacy.gov.au/>