



# GUIDELINES FOR PROVIDING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

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Can Assist provides financial assistance to country people in NSW to assist in reducing the financial burden associated with a cancer diagnosis.

These guidelines have been developed to support branches should they request general guidelines for providing financial assistance in their local communities.

Can Assist receives no government funding and relies on members/volunteers through a volunteer run branch network to fundraise and deliver assistance to provide support for country people with cancer.

Can Assist have 51 branches across New South Wales.

Requests for assistance is managed by branches

1. The branches may choose to advertise by using the Can Assist central number 1300 227 266 and Sydney office will then refer the patient to the appropriate branch.
2. Branches can provide a direct number which can be located on the Can Assist website.

It is strongly advised that assistance is considered for individuals and/or carers, family and dependants and they provide a referral from a health care professional (e.g. social worker, community nurse, doctor) or have a referral letter/email/phone call from staff at a Can Assist accommodation facility.

Requests for financial assistance may be made by anyone (the person, a family member, a health care practitioner, interested member of the community etc.) and the person must agree to the request.

It is recommended a request form should be completed for every request made. This form is available in a brochure or is available for download at [www.canassist.com.au/services](http://www.canassist.com.au/services).

Payments are to be made to a patient or third party on behalf of the patient, who is to present a valid invoice. It is strongly recommended branches do not give out cash.

The provision of assistance entails the use of Can Assist branch funds which needs to be documented and approved in all instances by two Branch Office Bearers.

## **Limits**

The Board recommends that cumulative assistance be restricted to no more than \$3,000 per person per Can Assist financial year. However, it is up to the individual branch to decide the branch limit up to \$3000.

This is to ensure that funds are distributed in a fair and equitable manner across the community and to provide assistance to as many people whose lives are affected by cancer as possible.

Where a branch believes there is a case for a person being provided with more than this level of assistance, (\$3,000) they are to attach notes about the decision making process to the Record of Financial Assistance.

Branches are to record in the Branch meeting minutes the financial assistance given in the period.

Records of Financial Assistance provided by each branch are to be kept and send a copy of the branch assistance summary to Sydney office annually.

### **Applications and Records**

The Record of Financial Assistance form is to be completed for all financial assistance given by a branch. The completed document is to be retained by the Branch Treasurer and kept for a three year period. The branch may choose to send the documentation to Sydney.

### **Purchase of Equipment**

Branches are strongly encouraged not to purchase equipment such as beds, walkers, shower rails, bath seats, oxygen tanks, medication dispensers, vehicles, furniture etc. Branches are not to donate equipment such as beds, walkers, shower rails, bath seats, oxygen tanks, medication dispensers, vehicles, furniture etc. to other organisations, including area health services. The provision of such equipment is the responsibility of government. If your branch has any queries in relation to this please contact the Sydney office.

### **Additional Cancer Assistance Organisations**

Can Assist does not work alone - the cancer sector in regional Australia is experiencing rapid change. When asked for financial assistance, branches may advise the patient of other services and programs available from other organisations. These include, but are not limited to, NSW Cancer Council, Centrelink, Red Kite, Star Light Foundation, Angel Flight, Red Cross. The Hospital Social Work Team, Local Council or the Division of GP's may be able to provide more specific information about the resources available in your community.

### **Government Assistance**

The government assistance provided to country people is available under the NSW Isolated Persons Transport and Accommodation Scheme (IPTAAS).

Isolated Persons Transport and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS) is government funded support to assist people needing to travel over 100 kilometres to a treatment Centre. Can Assist staff based in our accommodation in Wagga Wagga will help patients complete the required paperwork.

**For assistance with IPTAAS forms patients can be referred to EnableNSW: freecall number 1800 478 227 (1800 IPTAAS) or their local IPTAAS office, listed on the form.**

## Privacy Act & Release of Information

### Overview

There are two Acts that govern how Can Assist operates in relation to its members/volunteers and those receiving assistance in relation to the privacy and release of information:

- The Privacy Act of 1988 (as amended) and
- The Health Privacy Act of 2002

*Note:* Privacy within branches must be maintained, with the individual seeking assistance given a Client ID number. Personal details need to be maintained confidentially by the Contact Assist and Treasurer roles of the branch. It is recommended if further discussion is required within the Branch Executive and/or the exception process is required, only the Client ID and minimal information about the request is presented.

The Acts are lengthy and complex documents. Wherever possible, Can Assist has developed procedures which result in compliance with these Acts. If anyone dealing with details relating to members, volunteers or persons receiving assistance is unsure about whether or not they are complying with the Acts, they are to contact Sydney office for clarification.

The following rules can help reduce concerns and prevent inadvertent breaches of either Act:

- Membership and volunteer contact lists are accessible to the Office Bearers and are not to be distributed among members or externally;
- Always ask those being assisted to sign or acknowledge the privacy clause by signing the request for Financial Assistance Form;
- When taking personal information, always explain that this information will only be shared with the person/s authorising the assistance and the Treasurer completing the cheque;
- When taking information over the phone, explain that this information will be kept confidential;
- Always ensure that the person is aware of and consents to the request being made on their behalf;
- Never discuss personal details of an individual;
- Never discuss Can Assist business with those not directly involved.

## **Frequently Asked Questions about Privacy**

The following frequently asked questions clarify some common misconceptions about what sort of information can be exchanged and when.

**Q1 I am concerned about remitting branch member and volunteer information back to Sydney office.**

A1 *It is considered reasonable under the Act to exchange lawfully collected information for a directly related purpose. In this case, Sydney office uses the information about members and volunteers to fulfil its obligations for accurate insurance cover, compliance with the OLG&R, annual reporting and other responsibilities such as member communication. The membership application contains a clause acknowledging that members and volunteer information may be used within Can Assist to those involved in the branch administration or management.*

**Q2 I am a branch member and a cancer patient from my community has indicated they would like help from Can Assist. What do I do?**

A2 *Refer the person to the person designated as the contact for financial assistance for your branch. When Can Assist assists a person with cancer, they may need to pass on or discuss their details with other health service providers, for example, treating hospitals, specialists etc. When personal information is obtained, the Can Assist application forms require the person to acknowledge that their details may be exchanged or discussed with other health care providers. They do not have to agree to this, however, if they withhold their permission, it may make it difficult to verify their request for financial assistance. Under no circumstances should branch members discuss any personal details with anyone not directly involved in assisting the patient.*

**Q3 I am a branch member and someone has approached me asking if Can Assist can help their relative/friend with cancer. Can I discuss the patient's details with them?**

A3 *No. It is not appropriate to discuss patient details with a person unless you are the designated contact for financial assistance. Refer the matter to the person designated by the branch as the contact for financial assistance.*

**Q4 Can a branch accept referrals from a relative or friend of a person with cancer?**

A4 *Yes, the Branch can accept referrals from anyone. When notified of a person with a cancer diagnosis who is in probable need of Can Assist's help, ask the person who has notified you to tell them about Can Assist.*

**Q5 I have been asked to produce information about people and their carers for a special report.**

A5 *Exchange of information for surveys and reports is permitted where it has been de-identified. This means that no one's identity is able to be determined from the information provided. It may not be sufficient to remove names, it may be necessary to remove names, addresses, dates of birth, year of treatment etc. especially when dealing with small communities. Special provisions can apply if it is impossible to de-identify information and still produce meaningful data. Any request for this sort of information is to be directed to the Sydney office.*

**Q6 I am a branch member and/or Office Bearer and I have heard that someone in my community or another community has cancer. Can I, or the person designated by**

**the branch as the contact for financial assistance, contact them directly and offer assistance?**

A6 *No. It is not appropriate to 'cold call'. When notified of a person with a cancer diagnosis who is in probable need of Can Assist's help, ask the person who has notified you to tell them about Can Assist.*

**Q7 I am the person designated by the branch as the contact for financial assistance. Do I visit the person in their home or have them come to my home?**

A7 *No. Branches should consider contact by telephone, email and mail only.*

**Q8 Is it necessary to obtain permission from the person with cancer when the request for assistance comes from the carer or family member?**

A8 *No.*

**Q9 Is it necessary to obtain verification from a health or community care professional?**

A9 *Yes. The Branch needs to satisfy itself that the request is valid and the person has cancer. You must inform the person requesting the assistance that you may require this verification. Verification can be by telephone or in writing.*

## **Financial Assistance Process**

### **Eligibility Criteria**

- Diagnosis of cancer or has received treatment within 12 months of request date
- Demonstrated increased expenses due to cancer diagnosis – e.g. cost of treatment
- Demonstrated reduced income due to cancer diagnosis – e.g. inability to work whilst undergoing treatment.

### **Treatment defined as:**

Conventional treatments are surgery, radiotherapy, chemotherapy, hormone therapy and immunotherapy.

### **Branch Administration Process**

- Step 1. Referrals can be made directly by the patient to the local branch by submitting an application to the Contact Assist, a local Oncology Social Worker or health care professional:
  - a) Official Can Assist Financial Assistance Request Form
  - b) Letter from a health care professional confirming diagnosis
  - c) Unpaid accounts, with payment details or request for prepaid vouchers
- Step 2. Account sent to Treasurer for payment, which can either be paid to the supplier directly OR a cheque made out to the supplier can be given to the patient.
- Step 3. Patient notified of payment either by letter or phone including payment date, type and any reference or cheque number
- Step 4. Patient records for assistance are recorded on the Financial Assistance branch assistance summary sheet
- Step 5. The financial assistance summary sheet are reported in branch meetings and provided to the Can Assist Sydney office annually
- Step 6. Records are kept for three years after which the applications are commercially shredded

### **Recommended financial assistance items:**

- Medical (hospital/scan fees for Medicare approved treatment)
- Pharmaceutical (TGA approved, prescribed by doctor)
- Travel (for treatment)
- Accommodation for treatment
- Hire of palliative care and medical equipment (e.g. oxygen tanks, hospital beds at home)
- Personal care items (colostomy bags, incontinence pads)
- Utilities
- Council rates
- Travel for family members to assist with care
- Groceries
- Car Maintenance (including registration, repairs/service/insurance)

- Rent
- Mortgage (after any available redraw facilities are used)
- Complementary therapies – relating to cancer such as Lymphedema massage
- Wigs
- Taxis for local services (shopping, local doctor appointments)
- Pet boarding costs during treatment periods
- Private medical fees, including the fee gap up to \$500 per patient

### **Caps – dollar thresholds**

It is recommended the branch set the upper limit for some items to control expenditure and set a reasonable cost per item.

For example: - A \$250 wig for three clients instead of a \$750 wig for one client.

Consider the following thresholds:

- Mortgage payments - any redraw or additional funds must be accessed by patient first
- Council rates - one instalment (patient can reapply for additional when due)
- Wigs - \$250
- Car maintenance - \$1,000
- Private medical fees - \$500

Although the amount for financial assistance has been capped at \$3,000 per patient, Can Assist strongly recommends branches assess the cost of one-off purchases and approve items which are reasonable.

### **Associated Documents**

- Can Assist Financial Assistance Form
- Financial Assistance Summary Sheet/ Spreadsheet
- Associated documents:
  - Letter from healthcare professional confirming diagnosis (on letterhead)
  - Unpaid invoices
  - Supporting documentation for discretionary items

## **Request for Financial Assistance Form:**

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### **Request for Financial Assistance**

This form is to be completed for all requests for financial assistance. Please attach a letter from a health care professional confirming your diagnosis of cancer and an unpaid bill you are seeking assistance for. Your request will be kept confidential. This form will be retained by the branch or Sydney office for three years after the provision of assistance.

**Surname:**

**First Name:**

**Age:**

**O Male    O Female**

**Address:**

**Home telephone:**

**Mobile:**

**Email:**

**Names and ages of carer and dependants:**

**Type of cancer:**

**Current type of cancer treatment:**

**Have you had treatment in the last 12 months? Yes/No**

**Have you had decreased income due to your cancer diagnosis? Yes/No**

**If yes, please give details:**

**Have you had increased costs due to cancer diagnosis? Yes/No**

**If yes, please give details:**

**Assistance requested (item and amount):**

**I acknowledge that my personal details may be made available on a strictly confidential basis within Can Assist and/or my treatment organisation/s (list \_\_\_\_\_) in order for financial assistance to be given.**

**Applicant's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_**

**To amend or withdraw these details please contact the local Branch Contact Assist or Head Office.**

**Completion of this request form does not automatically guarantee financial assistance.**

**Please return this form to your local Can Assist Branch or phone Sydney office. on 1300 226 277 if you have any questions.**

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## Financial Assistance Program Exception Process

### Purpose:

When a branch receives a request for financial assistance that is either a) not on the approved list; b) exceeds the item cap; c) exceeds the overall support limit for the client.

### Process:

