

Accommodation Fees Policy

Accommodation Fees Policy

Statement

Able Australia applies an accommodation fee to all clients living in Able Australia supported shared homes and independent living units. Accommodation fees are the normal occupancy costs incurred when sharing accommodation (**excluding rent**).

The cost of Rent and Accommodation Fees are separated to comply with the NDIA Special Disability Accommodation requirements.

Scope

This policy applies to all clients living in Able Australia supported shared homes and independent living units.

Purpose

This policy outlines Able Australia’s approach to providing a clear and transparent framework for the setting and collection of accommodation fees.

The aim of this policy is to ensure clients:

- are informed of what is to be provided in respect of the accommodation fees.
- understand how the accommodation fees are calculated.
- understand when the fees will be reviewed.
- understand when accommodation fees are charged.
- understand the payment terms of the accommodation fees.

Definitions

- **Accommodation Fee** – A regular payment, that does not include rent, covering the cost of utilities, food, household consumables and communal furnishings and whitegoods. Accommodation fees may also be referred to as the Accommodation Charge or Board.
- **Allowable absence** – Hospital admission, holidays or other reason approved by either the Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operating Officer or Chief Financial Officer.
- **Room holding credit** - a daily credit to recognise an approved absence of the client from a property.
- **Residents** – people living in the accommodation.
- **Client** – person receiving services from Able Australia.

Policy details

1 What is included in and excluded from the Accommodation Fee?

1.1 Accommodation charges include:

- Utilities - (usage of electricity, gas, telephone, internet and water)
- Food
- Household consumables (eg. washing detergent, cleaning materials, toilet paper)
- Communal furnishings, whitegoods and brown goods (eg. refrigerators, washing machines, clothes dryers, television, dining tables and chairs, lounge suites and chairs, household equipment and utensils)

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1.2 Accommodation charges specifically **exclude**:

- Rent
- any NDIS funded services (eg. Garden Maintenance, Transport)
- personal items (e.g. Toiletries, personal furniture in bedrooms)
- Subscription services e.g. Netflix, Spotify etc
- Staff consumables e.g. coffee, tea, milk

2 Governance of Accommodation Fees

2.1 Able Australia will always comply with the NDIS Rules relating to accommodation fees. The current NDIS rules regarding board payments are:

- i. The written service agreement must specify:
 - any accommodation fees that have been agreed with the client.
 - what the accommodation fees will cover.
 - the method and timing of making the accommodation fee payments.
- ii. The accommodation fee must not exceed a maximum amount that is:
 - 50 per cent of base rate of the Disability Support Pension (DSP).
 - Plus: 100 per cent of any Energy Supplement.
- iii. Any board charged at the maximum amount must include at least:
 - Meals and consumables.
 - Utilities that would ordinarily be paid by occupants.
 - Access to whitegoods and laundry facilities.
 - Furniture and furnishings in the common areas.

Note: the “base standard rate of the DSP” is the amount under the Social Security Act 1991 that is the maximum basic rate for a person who is not under 21 and not a member of a couple.

3 Purpose and Calculation of Accommodation Charges

Able calculates their accommodation fee on a cost recovery basis, inclusive of administration expenses and not exceeding the maximum allowed by the NDIA (refer 2.1).

A full review and comparison of the relevant costs incurred and recouped will be undertaken at least once every five years. The timing of the full review will be determined by the Chief Financial Officer. Post this review, an adjustment may be made to the accommodation charges to ensure cost recovery continues to occur.

4 Variations to accommodation fee

Able has three variations of the accommodation fee:

- 4.1 28-day accommodation fee.
- 4.2 Utilities only accommodation fee.
- 4.3 Daily Accommodation Fee

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To minimise administration, it is preferred that all client residents in the house agree to the same accommodation fee.

4.1 28-day accommodation fee

Includes all communal expenses.

4.1.1 Calculation Method

The accommodation fee is the same for all Able properties. Refer Section 3.

4.1.2 Frequency

The 28-day accommodation fee will be invoiced to client residents in advance every 28 days. This results in residents being charged 13 times per year (365 days / 28 days = 13).

4.1.3 Accommodation Fee on Client Entering a Property

When a client enters an Able property, a daily rate will be applied to align the accommodation billing cycle, so all clients are invoiced on the same day. This will be applied from the date the client enters the property to the next 28-day billing cycle.

4.1.4 Accommodation Fee when Leaving the Property

When a client leaves an Able property, a daily rate will be applied from the end of the previous billing cycle to the last date in the accommodation.

4.1.5 Daily Rate for 28 Day Accommodation Fee

The daily rate applied when a client enters, or leaves accommodation will be the 28-day fee / 28 days = 1/28th of the 28 day accommodation fee.

Where a client has provided less than 90 days' notice to leave Able, no refund of accommodation fees will be provided.

4.2 Utilities only Accommodation Fee

Utilities in Able managed and Able owned properties are managed by Able. This provides clients with the best option of accessing the cheapest rates and ensures continuity of services when tenants change.

Residents in a shared residence may opt out of food and other costs, however, they may not opt out of the utilities component (unless all clients agree to opt out).

Utility Only Calculation

Calculated is based on the prior year utility expenses plus indexation (CPI Prior year March vs Current Year March).

4.2.1 Variances in Costs

Cost of utilities will vary dependent upon usage and the number of tenants in the property.

4.2.2 Billing Frequency

Invoiced monthly in arrears.

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- 4.2.3 Utilities Only when leaving the Property**
When a client leaves an Able property a daily rate for utilities is calculated. This will be applied from the last date the utility was invoiced, until the last date the client is in the property.
- 4.2.4 Utilities Only Evidence**
Clients have access to copies of the utility bills at any time.
- 4.2.5 Non-Utility Expenses e.g. those included within the 28-Day Accommodation Fee**
These are incurred at the direct cost of the clients (and outlined in 1.1, 1.2 and 2.1)

4.3 Daily Accommodation Fee (Available in ACT Only properties managed by Havelock Housing Association properties (Johnston St & Goyder St))

Daily Accommodation Fee is where the utilities for the property are managed by a 3rd party and the clients are only sharing the food expense.

- 4.3.1 Daily Accommodation Fee Calculation**
The Daily Accommodation Fee is calculated with reference to the 28 Day Accommodation Fee less the average utility expense and common area costs / 28 days

The calculation for the Daily Accommodation Fee is 28 days Accommodation Fee / 28 days x 83%

- 4.3.2 Daily Accommodation Fee Frequency**
The Daily Accommodation Fee is charged for every day the tenant is in the house.

5 Allowable Absences

- 5.1** A credit will be applied for each day a client is absent from their accommodation for a 24-hour period. This is called a “room holding credit”. The room holding credit is for the food a client is not using whilst they are absent from the accommodation. Clients still contribute to the utilities for the period they are absent.

- 5.2** The rate of the room holding credit is calculated by:

28 days Accommodation Fee / 28 days x 80%

A room holding credit will not be applied where:

- A client only pays for utilities
- A client pays a daily rate

6 Payment

- 6.1** Method of payment

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Able Australia’s preferred method of payment is for clients to enter into CentrePay arrangements with Able Australia. This minimises the level of administration required.

6.2 Payment of accommodation fees is due within 30 days of receiving the invoice.

6.3 In situations of financial distress, clients are encouraged to contact Able and discuss payment options.

7 Price Review

7.1 Accommodation charges may be indexed annually by reference to the changes to the Disability Support Pension (DSP).

7.2 The DSP is reviewed twice a year in March and September.

7.3 Any changes to accommodation fees will be notified in writing.

8 Responsibilities

8.1 Responsibilities of Able Australia

These positions are responsible for implementation and compliance monitoring of this policy in their work areas:

- Accounts Receivable Supervisor - responsible for the application of this policy.
- National Manager, Finance - will monitor and review the level of charges applied under this policy.
- Chief Financial Officer - will monitor for continuous improvement purposes.
- Employees are responsible for ensuring that the principles and components within this policy are applied in their daily work and that employees attend and participate in training and development in this area.

8.2 Responsibilities of clients

- Clients, families and other stakeholders are encouraged to provide feedback to the organisation regarding processes and practices and improve on how it applies. accommodation charges.
- Pay all fees due on time.

9 Employee Training and Development

- There is no applicable employee training required for this policy.

10 Related Policies, Procedures and References

- Able Australia Service Agreement
- Feedback and Complaints Policy
- Rental Charges Policy
- Accommodation Fee & Rental Charges Arrears Policy
- SDA Operational Guidelines
<https://www.ndis.gov.au/node/269>

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- SDA Pricing Arrangements and Price Limits
<https://www.ndis.gov.au/providers/housing-and-living-supports-and-services/specialist-disability-accommodation/sda-pricing-and-payments>

11 Standards and Conventions

- NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators
- Specialist Disability Accommodation Module
- Service Agreements with clients
- NDIS Code of Conduct
- Victorian Disability Worker Commission – Code of Conduct

12 Legislation

- Social Security Act 1991 – Cth
- NDIS Rules - Accommodation

Continuous Improvement

Improvements to this policy can be made by completing an Improvement Opportunity Form, attaching any suggested amendments and forwarding it to the National Manager, Quality and Innovation for review.