

BRIEFING PAPER



TO: Councillor Briefing Session

MEETING: 27 August 2015

AUTHOR: Manager Aged and Disability – Bridget Monro-Hobbs

DIRECTOR: Director Community Development – Katrina Knox

TITLE: **Realigning of the Property Maintenance Service**

SUMMARY

Under the implementation of the Commonwealths Aged Care reform Councils in Victoria have been guaranteed direct funding for Home and Community Care (HACC) programs until July 2018. However changes in models and associated funding arrangements are occurring within programs from July 2015. Accordingly a review of the operation of individual programs within HACC is required to ensure they are compliant with the July 2015 changes.

This report addresses the Property Maintenance service and is one of a number of briefing papers that will be prepared to advise of changes to individual services. A full briefing on the progress of the Aged Care reforms will take place later in 2015.

The report addresses the internal realignment of the service and does not involve the outsourcing of the service or adjustments to staffing levels.

The key impacts and actions associated with the July 2015 changes ensure compliance and funding are:

- The division of works into two categories – Home Maintenance and Home Modifications
- No funding for some works currently performed such as spring cleaning
- Changes to the scope of works that Council Home Maintenance will perform
- Valyarra contract will not to be renewed on expiry in November 2015.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Darebin City Council has operated a home maintenance service as part of the suite of HACC services to older and disabled clients since the 1970's. This program has a focus of providing support to ensure clients are safe within their homes.

From July 2015 due to the Aged Care reforms a number of changes to the model of funding for a range of Home and Community Care (HACC) programs have been implemented. The Aged and Disability department has commenced the process of reviewing services that are immediately affected by the July 2015 changes to ensure the services are compliant in order to maintain funding through the HACC program. The Home Maintenance Service is one of these programs.

The Property Maintenance Service is a service provided to HACC eligible residents by Council. The purpose is to provide practical assistance and support with basic safety and maintenance tasks in and around the home that the client (or carer) is unable to complete independently. This service has been offered since the 1970's.

To perform these safety and maintenance tasks Council both directly employs staff (Property Maintenance Officers (PMOs)) and has a contract with an external provider – Valyarra. The contact with Valyarra is due to expire in November 2015.

The tasks conducted by the service and supported through HACCC funding are set out in Table 1.

Council's PMO's perform tasks in level 1 and 2 and Valyarra provides support for Priority 2 and 3 level task requests,

The types of tasks that are not performed by the service include:

- Tasks usually performed by a registered tradesperson (e.g. plumber, electrician etc.)
- Major tasks, renovations or construction works
- Tasks that pose an unacceptable OHandS risk e.g. working at heights, work requiring scaffolding, or any work that is in breach of Occupational Health and Safety Acts, subordinate Acts, legislation, regulations and standards.

Task Priorities and Response Times

Priority Level	Task Category	Agreed Response Time
Priority 1	Smoke detector batteries, broken or gushing taps	Within 24 Hours
Priority 2 ASAP	Marked 'Urgent' by a referring Occupational Therapist due to client being as risk.	3-5 Working Days
Priority 2 Routine	Pre-existing repairs such as doors, door handles, leaking taps	3-5 Working Days
Priority 3 (currently completed by external contract)	Spouting and gutter clearing (Spring Cleaning)	1-2 weeks

Table 1

The service operates between 8.00am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday via a booking system.

ISSUES AND DISCUSSION

To ensure the Property Maintenance Service aligned and complied with the July 2015 changes a review of the tasks performed and service model was conducted. Through this process the changes necessitated by the aged care reforms were identified. The cost of providing the service and the operation of the Valyarra contract were also reviewed.

Alignment with the Commonwealth Aged Care Reforms:

With the implementation of the Aged Care Reforms in July 2015, what was previously one program became two programs - the Home Maintenance program and the Home Modifications program. These programs cover distinct services and have separate funding streams and reporting requirements. Home Maintenance now covers tasks primarily within the Priority 1 and 2 in Table 1, but excludes Priority 3 tasks and Home Modification that covers construction and modifications that are not in the main performed within the current service.

It is clear that the intent is to restrict Home Maintenance to work that is needed to maintain basic safety in the home and limit what is regarded as 'cosmetic' and or general in nature.

The immediate impact of these changes is that spring cleaning, including window cleaning and clearance of gutters will no longer be eligible for HACC funding. Accordingly these services will no longer be a part of the Home Maintenance program, beyond exceptional circumstances that will be evaluated on an individual basis.

Cost of Service

The review of the service identified it as currently the most costly of the range of HACC services provided by the Aged and Disability Department. In 2013-14 the full cost of providing an hour of Property Maintenance was approximately \$115.00, this compares with \$57.84 per hour for personal care.

This cost differential is due primarily to the varied and individual nature of both the work and the homes in which the work is performed.

Overall in 2014/2015 Government funded 67% of the service, Council 21% and client fees accounted for 12%. If tasks not funded under the revised Home Maintenance schedule continue, the contribution required by Council will rise considerably.

Valyarra Contract

With the exclusion from Home Maintenance of the tasks such as spring cleaning that currently performed by Valyarra there is no need to continue with this contract beyond the November 2015 term.

Council's current staffing levels will be maintained, with the HMO's able to provide the coverage needed under the revised Home Maintenance schedule.

Clients will be advised of the need to engage independent contractors for works that fall within the Home Modification schedule.

Service Requests

The model of lodging service requests will not change under the new schedule with requests coming as they do currently either from clients/residents personally or through assessments by Council staff or external Occupational Therapist.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Environmental Sustainability

Nil

Human Rights, Equity and Inclusion

HACC services are underpinned by the principles of equity of access, diversity and inclusion. The changes involved in the improvement plan do not disturb the alignment with these principles.

Economic Development

Nil

Other

Nil

FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

In 2014/2015 the funding breakdown of the service was Government 67%, Council 21% and 12%. This breakdown will continue under the realignment.

CONCLUSION

On review of the impact of the aged care reforms on Council's Home Maintenance program changes will be made to ensure the program operates within the new arrangements and accordingly continues to receive government funding.

These changes will result in changes to the scope of works that Council Home Maintenance will perform and all maintenance works will be performed by Council's PMO's with the Valyarra contract not to be renewed on expiry in November 2015.

A Communication Strategy will be developed to advise clients, referrers, staff and other stakeholders of the changes.

FUTURE ACTIONS

- Develop and implement a Communication Strategy for the benefit of clients, referrers, staff and other stakeholders.

CONSULTATION

- Access and Support Coordinator
- Referring Occupational Therapists

DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

The *Local Government Act 1989* requires members of Council staff and persons engaged under contract to provide advice to Council to disclose any direct or indirect interest in a matter to which the advice relates.

The Author of the Briefing Paper, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this briefing paper.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Nil

BRIDGET MONRO-HOBBS
Manager Aged and Disability
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