



Meals on Wheels
Queensland

The Meals on Wheels Profile

Meals on Wheels is a community service which enables frail older people and younger people with disabilities and their carers to remain in the comfort of their own homes and enjoy a level of independence and style of living to suit their individual needs.

Meals on Wheels in Queensland commenced at Ipswich in 1956 and operated as a totally community funded service until 1970 when the “Delivered Meal Subsidy Act” was introduced into the Federal Parliament. This Act provided the first Government assistance to Meals on Wheels Services. In 1985, the Home and Community Care (HACC) Program, was introduced as a joint Commonwealth/State funded program, and Meals on Wheels Services were included in that Program. Whilst the HACC Programs stated objects were to offer a range of basic support services so that persons could live in their own homes for as long as possible thereby preventing premature admission to Hostel or Nursing Home Care, Meals on Wheels Services were already operating within similar guidelines.

HACC assumed some cost assistance for Meals on Wheels Services, continuing the meal subsidy scheme and also providing some limited Capital Funding. The current meal subsidy is now \$2.50 per delivered meal. The greatest resource in the cost of meals is the contribution of many thousands of volunteers. The client also pays a fee for the meal so that the combination of volunteers, Government assistance, fee paid by the client and the wonderful Community support, meets the running costs of the Service. Such support demonstrates that Meals on Wheels is truly a Community Service.

BRANCHES

At the present time in Queensland there are 153 Meals on Wheels Services operating in the State. These are varied in the numbers of meals and manner in which the meals are obtained and delivered. There are 83 Services operating kitchens. 47 Services source meals from Hospitals (small towns and isolated areas) and 22 buy in from other kitchens or buy from commercial suppliers.

Many Services employ persons as Co-ordinators/ Supervisors/ Managers, Cooks/Chefs. Some Centres have up to 14 full and/or part-time staff in addition to large numbers of Volunteers. Meals on Wheels are increasingly experiencing the employment of paid personnel in core positions.



APPLYING FOR A MEAL



In Queensland, the recipient (HACC Client) usually applies for Meals on Wheels by contacting his/her nearest Service. Some Services require a Referral from the Client's General Practitioner; a Superintendent of Nursing; Community Health Centre; Social Worker or Nursing Agency. This Referral enables the Client to be properly assessed for purposes of the HACC Program. In the case of very elderly persons, entry into the system should not require formal assessment. People can self-refer or be referred by a relative or friend. It is left to the discretion of the service to determine whether they are HACC eligible. Meals can be served to anyone at the discretion of the local Service, but they can only claim the HACC subsidy for those HACC eligible clients. Meals on Wheels has formulated its own Referral Certificate for use by the Medical Profession. This is a convenient resource which also lists the clients' dietary needs.

CONTACTING THE SERVICE

Agencies wishing to refer clients to the Meals on Wheels Service should take account of the fact that Kitchens and Administrative Staff are in operation for early start; thus by 1 p.m. most Centres will have signed off. It is important therefore that Referrals are passed to Services by mid-day if possible. If this is not possible, in the Metropolitan area, a telephone call to the State Office of Queensland Meals on Wheels (07) 3205 5588 will ensure that the referral is passed on.

Once a patient is referred to the Meals on Wheels Service, it does not necessarily mean they will no longer be able to care for themselves indefinitely unless so stipulated. Some patients are referred after undergoing surgery or treatment in Hospital. Others may have suffered a serious illness at home; a bereavement of a close family member of the household, which temporarily disables them from undertaking shopping and cooking activities. It may be that after receiving a nutritious meal for some weeks, the patient regains health and confidence such as to enable them to again undertake normal household activities.

When the Client is referred to the Meals on Wheels Service, a person from that Service usually conducts an interview. At this interview, full details of their next of kin, Medical Practitioner, etc. is obtained. Also any special instructions regarding physical disability, special dietary needs, and/or the method of entry to the house is recorded for the information of the Volunteers who will be delivering the meals.

A brochure and booklet is handed to the Client on the commencement of meals. This gives full details of the service which will supply the meals, advice of the delivery days and the cost of meals.



SERVICE DIRECTORIES

Due to the complexities of boundaries in the Brisbane area, the State Office maintains a Service Directory identifying the various suburbs which are serviced by a particular Meals on Wheels Service. Hospital Discharge Personnel are regularly supplied with copies of this Directory on request to the State Office. The State Office can also readily supply a contact Telephone Number for any other Meals on Wheels Service within the State.

WHAT DOES MEALS ON WHEELS PROVIDE?

Meals on Wheels provides a three course meal consisting of soup, main meal (meat, fish or chicken) and three or four vegetables and sweet (dessert). Meals are delivered either hot, cold or frozen as required.



In addition, a Vitamin C supplement is supplied by means of orange juice, other juice (apple, blackcurrant) or fresh fruit.

Some Meals on Wheels services substitute a small salad in lieu of the soup during the hot summer months.

Some Services are now offering breakfast packs and snack packs as well as the lunchtime meal.

With the introduction of the new Food Safety regulations, a few Services are now serving frozen or cold meals which are left in their refrigerator, and then the client can heat as they wish.

Meals on Wheels have developed a Policy that meals are not to be left if the client is not at home. Clients can (the day before) advise the kitchen if they are not going to be home to collect their meal, and make alternative arrangements (such as leave with a neighbour or collect themselves from the Kitchen). Meals are no longer able to be left in Eskies or containers.

NUTRITIONAL CRITERIA

Most SPECIAL DIETS including Diabetics, Softserves, and most food intolerances can be catered for. These special problems are usually identified by the Referring Agency. In 2011, Qld Meals on Wheels employed a Senior Nutritionist who is readily available to assist the Services with dietary and nutritional requirements.



The Commonwealth Department of Health many years ago recommended that meals provided by the Meals on Wheels Service should supply about two-thirds of the Australian recommended dietary intake for Vitamin C, one half the dietary allowance for other Vitamins, Minerals and Protein, and at least one third of the total food energy (kilojoule, calorie) allowance.

It is important to meet these requirements as studies show that many Meals on Wheels Recipients hold part of their meal over until the evening. The delivered meal is often providing most of the daily nutrition for the elderly recipient. It is recommended that the full meal be eaten on delivery.



It is also recommended that the recipient eat other foods during the day, including a healthy breakfast. Suggestions are outlined in the Client booklet which is handed to clients on commencing the meals on wheels service.

STATE ASSOCIATION PROJECTS

GUIDELINES FOR FOODSERVICE MANAGEMENT - In 1999 Meals on Wheels together with the Australian Nutrition Foundation produced a Nutritional Manual which was provided free to all Member Services. The project involved the trialling of many foods, survey of clients, interviews, etc. It has resulted in:-

- Nutritional Guidelines for all Meals on Wheels Services (including hygiene issues, etc.) and video.
- A Meals on Wheels Recipe Book with the inclusion of vegetarian and meals for NESB clients.
- A Guideline booklet for the Client, outlining their daily nutritional requirements.

The Manual was reviewed in 2004 and our Senior Nutritionist is currently undertaking a further review of this Manual.

GUIDELINES FOR SERVICE MANAGEMENT - A HACCC-funded resource titled Guidelines for Service Management was introduced at Workshops to all Meals on Wheels Services in Queensland during 1998. This takes into account the 7 HACCC National Standards and the 9 Meals on Wheels Principles. This resource has enabled more efficient management of Meals on Wheels Centres as well as providing equitable access to service by clients. It was provided free to all Member Services.

In 2011 Qld Meals on Wheels engaged the services of a professional company to develop new Policies and Procedures so that Services can comply with requirements of Government. The policies and procedures are available on CD which Services may load onto their computer. Each Service can individualise the policies to suit their own particular Service. They are available to Member Services at the very small charge of \$25 per CD.

WORKPLACE HEALTH & SAFETY MANUAL – This Manual is provided free of cost to Member Services.

FOOD SAFETY WORKBOOK / FOOD SAFETY INFORMATION - These two Manuals were produced by our Food Services Manager who travels throughout the State helping Kitchens to comply to Council requirements and developing their Food Safe Plan.

FOOD SAFETY SUPERVISORS - During the past few years, our Food Services Manager has undertaken training of personnel from the Services as qualified Food Safety Supervisors. This is a requirement under the Government's Food Safety Plans and QMOW arranged and paid for training for over 208 people to undertake the course through Bremer TAFE. Services requiring extra staff trained as Food Safety Supervisors are now required to pay a small fee. (This often happens as staff come and go).

All Kitchens throughout the State should by now have their Food Safety Plans in place. This has been a giant undertaking for many Services, particularly the smaller country areas where many are run solely by volunteers.

WHAT IS THE COST OF THE MEAL?

Meals on Wheels is not a free service. Clients pay a charge between \$5.50 and \$9.00 for their meal which is delivered to their door about mid-day, usually on week



days, Mondays to Fridays. Some Services are now delivering cold meals early in the morning which is placed in the clients' refrigerator, so the client can heat it either for the lunch or evening meal. Some clients have been loaned Microwave ovens which Services have purchased for this purpose. One Service in North Queensland delivers a meal during the evening instead of the lunchtime meal. Costs of meals depend upon conditions prevailing in a particular area, and each local Meals on Wheels Service sets its own price. Variations in the cost of meat, fruit and vegetables all affect the meal price.

Meals sourced from Government Hospitals are currently supplied at cost of \$5.50 (there has been no increase for several years).

MEALS ON WHEELS IS NOT MEANS-TESTED - (i.e. the Meals on Wheels Service does not enquire into the financial affairs of its' Clients). All client records are kept strictly confidential.

VOLUNTEERS

Meals on Wheels Services are represented by the largest Volunteer Workforce of any voluntary Organisation in Queensland – approximately 15,000 throughout the State. In almost all Services, volunteers are required each day in the Kitchens to assist in preparation of the meals. Approximately 83 Kitchens are operated by Meals on Wheels in the State of Queensland. In addition to the Kitchen volunteers, other persons are required with cars, to deliver the meals.



It is recommended that two persons go out on deliveries to take the meals to the home of the clients. These volunteers are defined as “driver and assistant”. This is a team; and teams deliver up to 20 meals per run. This can be varied by the distance travelled. Some Services in outlying Country areas travel longer distances to deliver meals than some inner-City runs. It usually takes about 1 ½ hours for the delivery team to deliver the meals allocated to them.

Where insufficient Volunteers are available for delivery Rosters, some Centres now employ Delivery Drivers. These persons are carefully recruited and most undertake duties at Kitchens in addition to delivery Rosters. In an effort to ease the burden of Volunteers, those Centres which deliver large quantities of frozen meals also provide this service by delivery vans.

Ideally, volunteers are rostered once each four weeks, so that a Service operating with three (3) teams would require six (6) volunteers each delivery day - 30 each

week, making a total of 120 every four weeks. Large Services need between 350 and 500 volunteers a month to maintain the delivery service.

It is encouraging for Meals on Wheels Services to have students from Universities, Colleges and High Schools, undertaking community service. Others involved include Special Schools, Police Cadets, Girls and Boys Brigades, Scouts, Guides, etc. Persons ordered to undertake Community Service by the Courts also attend at some Centres. Many large companies, banks, insurance companies etc. have a policy that all their employees undertake some type of community service and many have opted to deliver meals on a regular basis.

Most Volunteers in Meals on Wheels Services come from single income and fixed income families. Because of the increasing percentage of families having both



parents in the workforce, it is becoming more and more difficult to maintain volunteer numbers. Many elderly persons are themselves involved as volunteers for Meals on Wheels. The Kitchen Supervisor has a very onerous task in seeing that all teams are intact each day for the deliveries. Most Services make a small allowance to their drivers to assist with petrol costs. Many volunteers are happy to bear the petrol costs themselves as part of this vital community service.

NEW STATE ASSOCIATION INITIATIVES

Approximately 8 years ago, a Regional Support Officer was employed to trial a project where they would take responsibility for looking after the Services within a certain region. This project proved to be so successful that over the next few years, the State Association applied for further HACC funding to undertake similar projects through the rest of the State. We now have five Regional Support Officers, each of whom have the responsibility of looking after up to 30 Services within their allocated regions. One RSO is based in Townsville (North Qld) , one in Rockhampton

(Central Qld), one in Kingaroy (South-west corner), one for North Brisbane and Sunshine Coast and one for Brisbane South and Gold Coast areas.

The State Association currently employs 10 Staff, including a CEO, Admin Manager, Nutritionist, Food Services Manager, MDS/ Admin Officer, and five RSO's.

HISTORY OF QUEENSLAND MEALS ON WHEELS

In 1956, the late Mrs. Rhoda Cameron of Ipswich (then the wife of the Commonwealth Health Minister) saw the need for Meals on Wheels. She had been on an overseas trip to England, where she saw a form of meals service in operation. She felt this was something needed in her own community and she returned to Ipswich and endeavoured to promote the idea within the Community. She was not initially successful, but her determination was not dampened, and she, together with the late Mrs. Russell, commenced a "Meals on Wheels" Service in her back yard gardener's Cottage, serving meals from a Thermos flask and pudding basin, the price being two shillings (20 cents) per meal. At this time, there were no funds such as meal subsidies or Government Grants, so these people went ahead in faith, relying upon the sale of the meals to self-fund their activities. From these humble beginnings, the concept of Meals on Wheels in Queensland has grown. Whilst Mrs. Cameron and her helpers delivered two meals to needy residents of Ipswich, over 2.25 million meals are now delivered each year throughout the State of Queensland.

On 13 May 2006, Ipswich Meals on Wheels is celebrated its 50th year of operation , and a special function was held with an invitation extended to every Meals on Wheels Service in Queensland. Queensland Meals on Wheels celebrated this event (the 50th Anniversary of Meals on Wheels in Queensland), at its State Conference on 6th – 8th September 2006 at the Gold Coast. In 2009, Queensland Meals on Wheels hosted a State and a National Meals on Wheels Conference which was run back-to-back at the Sheraton Brisbane. The Governor, Her Excellency Ms Penelope Wensley AC (who is also our Patron) officially opened the State Conference and paid a glowing tribute to the Meals on Wheels volunteers.



More
than just
a meal

**THIS PROFILE PROVIDES A GENERAL OUTLINE OF
MEALS ON WHEELS SERVICES IN QUEENSLAND.**

For further details please contact your local Meals on Wheels service.



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