

Country High School Hostels Ex Gratia Scheme

Frequently Asked Questions

Eligibility

Q: Am I eligible?

A: You are eligible to apply if you are over 18 years of age and experienced abuse prior to 1 January 2007 while boarding at a hostel administered by the *Country High School Hostels Authority Act 1960* (CHSHA) at: Albany, Bunbury, Carnarvon, Esperance, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Katanning, Merredin, Moora, Narrogin, Northam or Port Hedland.

Q: Am I still eligible if I was a boarder at a country hostel but suffered no abuse?

A: No. The ex gratia payments are only open to those who experienced abuse while boarding at a CHSHA hostel.

Q: Are family members or the estate of deceased persons who were formerly boarders at a CHSHA hostel eligible to apply for an ex gratia payment under this Scheme?

A: No. Family members or the estate of deceased persons who were formerly boarders at a CHSHA hostel are NOT eligible to apply for an ex gratia payment. The person on whose behalf the Application is being made must be living at the time of the Application.

Q: What can I do if I am under 18 years of age and have been abused while boarding at a CHSHA hostel?

A: You can contact the Department for Child Protection by either telephoning **1800 622 258** (freecall) or writing to:
Department for Child Protection
PO Box 6334
East Perth WA 6892

If the application process has been distressing and you need to talk to someone, please phone the counselling hotline at Crisis Care on **1800 227 792**.



Applications

Q: Do I need a lawyer to represent me with my Application?

A: No, legal representation is not required as the assessment process will be carried out by experienced, professional people and verified by an independent person. Should an Applicant choose to use a lawyer, this may incur costs that will need to be borne by the applicant.

Q: Will information be provided to help me complete an Application?

A: Yes, the Guide to completing the Application is designed to provide you with helpful information. It is available at www.communities.wa.gov.au or can be obtained by phoning **1800 246 768** (freecall) or emailing **chsh@communities.wa.gov.au**.

Q: When can I submit my Application to the Scheme?

A: Applications open on 30 November 2012 and will be open for 6 months.

Q: What is the final date to put my Application in?

A: To be considered for the Scheme you must have your Application in by 5.00pm (WST) on Friday 31 May 2013.

Q: Can I make more than one Application?

A: No, You can only make one Application to the Scheme and it is very important to include in your Application as much information as you can about all your negative experiences while boarding at a country hostel.

Q: Can I make an Application after the Scheme's closing date?

A: No. Applications received after the closing date will not be accepted.

Q: A friend has had similar experiences to me while boarding in a country hostel, can I copy their Application?

A: No. The Application must contain your own personal experiences. It is an offence to knowingly provide false or misleading information.

Q: What if I was abused by a fellow boarder?

A: The Scheme only covers abuse perpetrated by hostel employees and/or volunteers.

If the application process has been distressing and you need to talk to someone, please phone the counselling hotline at Crisis Care on **1800 227 792**.

Application Process

Q: How will my application be assessed?

A: Research will be carried out to verify you were a country hostel boarder, after which an Assessor will review your written application and conduct a telephone interview. The Assessment Panel will then determine your ex gratia payment offer.

Q: How long will it take to process my Application?

A: The length of time is dependent on how many Applications are received; however, it is anticipated that all ex gratia payment offers will be made by 31 December 2013.

Q: Will I be asked for additional information to support my application?

A: All applicants will be contacted by telephone prior to their claims being assessed to discuss if there is any further information to support their application.

Please note: For these reasons, it is vital that you keep the Scheme informed of any changes to your contact details. Forms to change contact details will be available at www.communities.wa.gov.au. If you cannot be contacted, then your Application will be assessed only on the information you have provided in your written application.

Q: Will the information I provide in my application be confidential?

A: Yes, all details and documents provided will be subject to strict confidentiality.

Q: What happens if I have a complaint about the Scheme?

A: Complaints can be made on the basis of an error of process and/or an error of fact. They will be managed according to the Complaints Internal Policy and Procedures Guidelines of the Department for Communities which are available at www.communities.wa.gov.au. If an applicant is not satisfied with the outcome of a complaint, they are able to take it to the office of the Western Australian Ombudsman.

Q: What happens if I change my contact details?

A: If any of your contact details change after you have submitted your Application, it is essential that you advise the Scheme of your up-to-date contact details. You can update your details by calling the Scheme on **1800 246 768** (freecall), emailing chsh@communities.wa.gov.au or filling out the change of contact details form at www.communities.wa.gov.au

Q: What happens if I am diagnosed with a terminal or life threatening illness after submitting my application ?

A: If you are diagnosed with a terminal or life threatening illness before your Application is finalised, it is important to inform the Scheme and to provide a medical certificate showing the following details:

- your current condition
- date of diagnosis
- current treatment
- your prognosis.

In these circumstances, the assessment of your Application will be given priority.

If the application process has been distressing and you need to talk to someone, please phone the counselling hotline at Crisis Care on **1800 227 792**.

Ex gratia payments

Q: How is the ex gratia payment determined?

A: The ex gratia payment will be determined by an assessment team and will be based on the severity of the abuse you suffered.

Q: What happens if I am not satisfied with my ex gratia payment offer?

A: The quantum of an ex gratia payment cannot be the subject of a complaint. The assessment decision will be final and not subject to review, unless there has been an error of process or error of fact.

Q: What conditions are associated with accepting an ex gratia payment?

A: Apart from providing the Scheme with your personal bank account details, there are no conditions for accepting an ex gratia payment offer.

Q: Will any ex gratia payment I receive be taxed?

A: The Australian Tax Office has confirmed that payments under this Scheme will not be taxed (either as ordinary income or for capital gains).

Q: Will receiving an ex gratia payment affect my Family Tax benefit payment?

A: As the ATO has confirmed that ex gratia payments under this Scheme will not be taxable, Family Tax benefit payments will not be effected.

Q: Will receiving an ex gratia payment affect my Centrelink pension?

A: Ex gratia payments made under this Scheme will be exempt from the social security income test.

Department for Communities

e: chsh@communities.wa.gov.au

w: www.communities.wa.gov.au

National Relay Service TTY: 13 3677
(for people with hearing and/or voice impairment)

This document is available on request in alternative formats such as large print, audio file and braille.