

Volunteer Welfare Fund Frequently Asked Questions

Can my brigade have the annual contribution fee debited directly from their VFRS Operation and Efficiency Payment?

Yes. Each brigade can decide to use funds from their own resources to make the welfare fund contribution payment. Brigade Operation and Efficiency Payments are one source of available funds that may be used to cover the annual contribution fees. Membership of the WAVFRSA welfare fund is a brigade decision, as is the use of funds from whichever source including the annual WAVFRSA Brigade Operation and Efficiency Payment, to pay the contribution fee.

How is the annual brigade contribution fee decided upon, and will it alter from year to year?

The welfare fund Committee of Management will seek advice of the level of activity of the fund, the resilience of monies invested and the ability of the fund to self sustain without eroding the fund capital. This advice will be sought every six months.

The annual contribution will be set in the last quarter of each financial year and will be based on the return on investments, take-up of brigades electing to contribute as welfare fund members, the number of claims and their value. Every attempt will be made to keep brigade contribution fees as low as possible, and affordable for all brigades.

Our member is incapacitated by illness or a medical condition. Do we send originals of medical reports, certificates, bills or invoices to support our application?

No. Only copies of documentation directly relevant to the application should be included. Further information may be sought by the committee prior to a decision being made.

Does the WAVFRSA Welfare Fund cover life members of my Brigade?

Provided that the life member is still a registered member of a contributing WAVFRSA Brigade they will be eligible for a claim.

How are payments (grant/monies) paid to the claimant?

In the majority of cases, grant monies are paid directly to the member brigade for distribution via the Brigade Captain or Brigade Secretary. There are occasions where the Welfare Fund will make direct payments to organisations to clear outstanding debts or arrears. The welfare fund Secretary can advise.

Can the WAVFRSA Welfare Fund accept donations and provide receipts?

Yes. Our taxation status as a Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) allows the WAVFRSA Welfare Fund to accept cash donations and provide a receipt for taxation purposes to the donors

What are some examples of financial help sought in past applications for Welfare Fund support?

- Members who find themselves in severe financial hardship due to illness/injury.
- Unable to make payments on utility and household bills and accounts, mortgage repayments, rent.
- Help to meet funeral expenses.
- Purchase specialist medical equipment.
- Assist with travel expenses during family crisis, hospitalisation etc.

Why do brigades have to affiliate with WAVFRSA before they can join the Welfare Fund?

The administration costs associated with managing and operating the WAVFRSA Welfare Fund are being met from WAVFRSA funds. This will ensure that costs will not erode the funds available for claims to support brigade members.

Can individual brigade members make a direct Welfare Fund application?

Generally no. Brigades are the Fund members and in devolving the responsibility to brigades to manage any funds awarded, confidentiality and governance of member funds is maintained at this level. Should any individual not wish to approach their brigade management, they should consider speaking to their Association Executive representatives or the Association Executive Officer for advice.

Who is eligible for support for Welfare Fund grants?

Registered WAVFRSA members of brigades that contribute to the WAVFRSA Welfare Fund are eligible to make application. Also immediate dependent family members of a registered brigade member, are eligible to make application.

Will the applicant be contacted about the claim?

Unlikely. In most cases, contact is made between the Brigade Captain and / or Secretary and the Welfare Fund Secretary. Should additional information be required to clarify details of an application, the Welfare Fund Secretary will contact the Brigade Captain and / or Secretary.

How does the Brigade manage the funds if a welfare grant is made?

The WAVFRSA will provide payment to the Member Brigade. Most grants are untied funds and thus, we expect the brigade to dispense the funds to meet the application criteria i.e. payment of accounts in arrears, to cover funeral expenses etc.

The letter confirming payment to the brigade from the Welfare Fund Secretary will explain how the grant monies have been awarded, and for what specific purpose they are to be used. However, we understand Brigades are in a much better position to assess their member's immediate needs particularly at the time of the grant being received. Ultimately, brigades provide the support most appropriate at the time.

Is there an appeal process should the brigade disagree with the Committee of Management's decision?

No. The decision of the WAVFRSA Welfare Fund Committee of Management is final and no correspondence will be entered into.

Important: the level of detail supplied in the application is thus critical to provide the Committee members with a comprehensive picture of the circumstances and the assistance sought.

Does the Brigade need to report how any grant funds are spent? Do we provide receipts?

No. The strength of the process lies with the WAVFRSA and the Brigade managers jointly managing the application and the grant. Most grants of monies are untied, thus WAVFRSA entrust the Brigade to dispense the funds to the benefit of their member. WAVFRSA Welfare Fund does not require a receipt(s) for the untied monies granted to the Brigade.

An acknowledgement of receipt for the total amount of the grant and a completed acquittal form is required to be returned to the Fund Committee for audit purposes.

Is there a limit to the funds that are granted per application?

Initially Yes. Although there are exceptions allowed by the Welfare Fund Rules the Committee of Management can make grants to a maximum of **\$5,000** for any application. On average most grants are around the **\$500 to \$1000** mark.

Are personal fund financial details of the application required to be provided?

No. Although the application pack is made up of 3 parts. Part 3 is a budget calculator that assists claimants to prepare their own personal/family budget, however if submitted this may provide the Committee of Management with a clearer picture of what level of assistance is required. It is important to note that the clearer the picture presented to the Committee of Management in the application form, the easier it will be for an informed and quick decision to be made. Applications will have an attached statement by the brigade that explains the member's circumstances and clearly indicates the type and level of support sought. This can assist the Committee to arrive at an informed decision.

What privacy provisions relating to the applicant and their personal details have been established?

Ideally, Brigade OIC's/Secretaries along with the Welfare Fund Secretary process the claim, with all details contained to protect the privacy and details of any claim. Every effort is made by WAVFRSA staff and committee of management to be discrete and to keep details of the claim strictly confidential. No external reporting of details occurs.

Will full details of claims and personal details be divulged or published?

No. Details of the applicant, the Brigade, or the circumstances surrounding the application or processing of a claim are NOT communicated or reported. The WAVFRSA Welfare Fund Committee of Management reports broadly to the WAVFRSA Board, the number of claims processed and total value of claims on a monthly basis.

Is GST payable on the Welfare Fund Contribution?

No. WAVFRSA Welfare Fund brigade contributions do not attract GST.