

Health Consumers' Council WA (Inc.)

CONSUMER REPRESENTATIVE POLICY

Consumer Representative Program: Policy and Guidelines for the Health Consumers' Council Consumer Representative Program

Principles

The Health Consumers' Council supports and values Consumer Representatives. We recognise the voluntary effort of many Consumer Representatives and appreciate the contribution made by Consumer Representatives.

Consumer Representatives will be:

- (1) Capable of reflecting viewpoints and concerns of consumers
- (2) Persons in whom the Health Consumers' Council has confidence.

To facilitate its aim of providing effective, confident and consultative Consumer Representatives HCC considers recruitment, training and support of Consumer Representatives to be one of its key functions.

Consumer Representatives fall into four categories:

- Individuals nominated by HCC
- Individuals nominated by HCC but selected by the requesting organisation
- HCC representatives – selected by, and representing, HCC
- Members supported generally by HCC for consideration for national committees (see separate policy)

Consumer Representatives who represent the Health Consumers' Council will be approved by HCC Board.

It is not appropriate for Consumer Representatives to “represent” the Health Consumers' Council unless appointed by HCC to do so. However all Consumer Representatives will be guided in their contribution by the following set of health rights:

- The Right to Safety
- The Right to be Informed
- The Right to Participate
- The Right to Redress
- The Right to Consumer Education
- The Right to Respect

Members who represent HCC as a Consumer Representative are required to:

- Sign a “Statement of Agreement” (Attachment 1)
- Submit written reports (Attachment 2), and
- To participate in meetings of the Health Issues Group (HIG) as requested.

If there is a degree of urgency about consumer representation a HCC staff or Board member will participate in meetings until a Consumer Representative is agreed upon. HCC will select the best and most appropriate person for the position.

Aim

The Health Consumers' Council believes that genuine effective consumer participation is a necessary part of a patient centred health care system. Consumer Representatives play a vital role on many government and industry decision-making and advisory bodies and adds value to the outcomes. Consumer representation ensures that these bodies have access to a wide range of views.

Scope

This policy covers the Consumer Representative Program of the Health Consumers' Council including the process for recruitment, selection and training of consumer representatives.

The guidelines attached to this policy are aligned with the DOCEP publications Consumer Representation on Boards and Committees: 'A Guide for Consumers' and 'A Guide for Industry and Government'

Guidelines

Purpose

These guidelines are provided to give direction to HCC members who are recommended/appointed as Consumer Representatives.

What is a Consumer Representative?

A Consumer Representative is a committee member who voices the consumer perspective and takes part in the decision making process on behalf of consumers. This person is usually nominated by, and is accountable to, an organisation of consumers.

Being a Consumer Representative may take a number of different forms, some of which include participating:

- As a member of a statutory body or Ministerial Taskforce
- In research projects, forums or focus groups
- Meetings where policy is developed and/or action plans devised
- In evaluation of services provided
- In development of educational material
- In complaints resolution schemes
- On a range of committees including advisory committees.

Recruitment

The Health Consumers' Council welcomes HCC members and others to consider becoming a Consumer Representative. Consumers wishing to be considered for nomination/selection as a consumer representative need to be:

- 1) A member of the Health Consumers' Council
- 2) Interested in becoming a Consumer Representative and have her/his name placed on the Consumer Representative Register
- 3) Willing to undertake training provided by HCC.

The Health Consumers' Council will support the recruitment process by:

- 1) Maintaining a Consumer Representative Placement Register which indicates areas of knowledge, expertise and interest of consumer representatives
- 2) Ensuring that consumer representatives match the requirements of the committee as closely as possible
- 3) Promoting the Consumer Representative Program through Health Matters, the NGO sector and to all new members
- 4) Providing training for current and prospective consumer representatives as required (usually four courses per annum)
- 5) Promoting training through advertising, word of mouth and individual contact
- 6) Support and mentoring as required.

Training

The Health Consumers' Council conducts regular training courses to prepare individuals to be effective Consumer Representatives.

Courses are promoted through Health Matters, the non-Government sector and to all new members.

All Consumer Representatives, HCC members, persons from other health organisations and NGO's may attend training sessions at no charge.

The aim of the Training Course is to develop the skills of effective consumer representation by providing:

- 1) Knowledge of WA and Australian health system
- 2) Knowledge of Rights and Responsibilities in the health system
- 3) Knowledge about the work of the Health Consumers' Council
- 4) Knowledge about the philosophy of the Health Consumers' Council
- 5) Knowledge about Communication, Coalitions of Influence and Negotiation
- 6) Knowledge about the consumer concerns

Procedures

Request for a Consumer Representative

Organisations requesting HCC to nominate a Consumer Representative should supply the following information:

- Terms of Reference of the committee
- Frequency and venue of meetings
- Expertise and/or experience required for the committee
- Provision of sitting fees, out-of-pocket expenses, etc
- Time, date and venue of next meeting
- Name and contact details of Committee Chairperson

In addition HCC should provide to the requesting organisation:

- A copy of this policy
- A copy of the Advice to Chairpersons
- A Copy of the expectations that HCC has of the requesting committee
- A copy of what the requesting committee can expect from HCC
 - Support and information for Consumer Representatives
 - A large health consumer network available for consultation
 - Fearless and frank advice from the Consumer Representative

Selection

Selection is undertaken by discussion between Executive Director, the Deputy Director and the Consumer Participation Project Officer. The following selection criteria will be used:

- 1) Ability to address issues from a consumer perspective
- 2) Relationship with the people and groups they represent
- 3) Possession of good communication skills or willingness to develop these skills with appropriate training and support
- 4) Respect for diversity of consumers and fellow committee members
- 5) Ability to work effectively in a team environment
- 6) Understanding, commitment and maintenance of confidentiality when it is required
- 7) Interest in health issues and current activity in health sector
- 8) A broad network with which to consult
- 9) Accessibility to the consumers they represent
- 10) The ability to bring to the committee an understanding of health issues that are dealt with by the committee
- 11) Ability and willingness to report back to consumers.
- 12) Membership of Health Consumers' Council
- 13) Participation in Health Issues Group on request
- 14) Willingness to report to Health Consumers' Council
- 15) Willingness to provide notification of changes to committees

Procedure for Placement of Consumer Representatives

Upon receipt of a request for a Consumer Representative, generally Expressions of Interest will be called from all members who have indicated:

- (1) A willingness to be a Consumer Representative
- (2) An interest in/ experience of the particular health area requesting for a Consumer Representative (this information is held on the Health Consumers' Council Database)
- (3) People who have undertaken the Health Consumers' Council Consumer Representative Skills Training.

On some occasions, individual Health Consumers' Council Members will be approached directly to become a Consumer Representative.

Appointment of a Consumer Representative

The Health Consumers' Council depends on Consumer Representatives to promote and articulate a consumer perspective in all parts of the WA health system. The Council is always willing to provide support, advice and information to Consumer Representatives.

Once the appointment of the Consumer Representative has been confirmed and the name of committee confirmed this information will be added to the Consumer Representative data base.

- The Chair or contact person for the committee will be notified of the consumer representative's name and contact details and given a copy of Advice for Chairpersons
- The consumer representative will be notified in writing of their appointment including:
 - Copy of Policy for Consumer Representatives Program
 - Information about reporting obligations including suggested format
 - Information about the Consumer Representatives Network meetings
 - Information about support available from HCC
 - Declaration on Patient-Centred Healthcare from the International Association of Patients' Organisations

Appointments will be for three years unless appointed for a set period by the committee or the term of the Committee if less than three years.

Evaluation of Consumer Representatives will be undertaken by HCC every 12 months. A self-assessment survey will be forwarded to each Consumer Representative for completion and return.

Evaluation of Consumer Representative Skills Training is done at the conclusion of each training course. The results are analysed and then influence the development of the next training course.

Information about new committee appointments will be published in Health Matters.

Adopted: 27 February 2007

Reviewed: 2009

Health Consumers' Council WA (Inc)

CONSUMER REPRESENTATIVES PROGRAM AGREEMENT

Consumer Representatives: Agreement for Consumer Representatives
Appointed to Committees

The Consumer Representative undertakes to participate in committee and other forums, representing a broader group of like-interested members of the community. The Representative does this on behalf of, and as a member of the Health Consumers Council. The Consumer Representative agrees that their contribution as a Consumer Representative will be based on the five Health Consumer Rights:

- ❖ The Right to Safety
- ❖ The Right to Information
- ❖ The Right to be Heard
- ❖ The Right to Redress
- ❖ The Right to Community Education

In respect to the:

Name of committee, forum or other event: _____

Name of Consumer Representative: _____

Will be required to:

1. Attend meetings: _____
(Frequency)

2. Refer to contact person on committee:

Name: _____

Position: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

3. Refer to HCC contact person: _____

4. Signature of Consumer Representative: _____

5. Signature of HCC Representative: _____

6. Date: _____

HEALTH CONSUMERS COUNCIL WA (Inc)

CONSUMER REPRESENTATIVE MEETING REPORT

One of the important aspects of consumer representation on committees is sharing the information with other consumers. As a means of doing this the Health Consumers' Council is requesting a report from each consumer representative on the activities of the committee/s they are currently or have been participating in. We are only requesting a brief report no longer than one page and in dot point format.

Representatives Name:

Name of the Committee:

Purpose of the Committee:

What have the consumer issues been?

What issues/decisions could affect Health Consumers' Council or consumers?

Has the committee discussed any items of interest to the Health Consumers' Council?

Do you have any items of interest that could be published in Health Matters?

Please return report to the Consumer Participation Programme Coordinator:

Email: info@hconc.org.au

Fax: 9221 5435

Mail: GPO Box C134 PERTH WA 6000

CONSUMER REPRESENTATIVE PROGRAM POLICY

Expectations of the Health Consumers' Council from Committees and what committees can expect from Health Consumers' Council

What the Health Consumers' Council expects from Committees

- Sufficient and appropriate notification of meetings including changes/cancellations
- An inclusive process for out of session decisions
- The provision of meeting documents in a timely manner
- Respect for the Consumer Representative
- Opportunity for the Consumer Representative to speak at meetings
- The understanding that representatives may sometimes need time to consult with other consumers on some issues
- Reimbursement of meeting expenses as a minimum payment requirement.

What Committees can expect from HCC and the Consumer Representative

- Support and information for the Consumer Representative
- A large consumer network available for consultation
- Frank and fearless advice from a consumer perspective
- An interest in and knowledge of current health issues particularly those relevant to the committee
- Adequate preparation for meetings
- Understanding of, commitment to and maintenance of confidentiality when required
- Ability to work effectively in a team environment

Health Consumers' Council WA (Inc)

CONSUMER REPRESENTATIVE PROGRAM

Qualities of an Effective Health Consumer Representative
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Effective consumer representatives are able to:

- Address all the issues from the perspective of the consumer;
- Develop and maintain relationships with the people and groups they represent;
- Use strong communication skills, or develop those skills with the appropriate training and support;
- Respect diversity;
- Work effectively in a team environment;
- Understand, commit to and maintain confidentiality when it is required;
- Maintain an interest in current health issues and news especially those issues relevant to health consumers and to the committees on which they sit;
- Participate in community activities that are relevant to their consumer networks;
- Have a broad community network with which to consult regularly;
- Be accessible to the consumer groups they represent; and
- Bring to the committee some understanding of the issues and health services.

Newly appointed consumer representatives may bring these attributes to the role or may be committed to developing these skills and abilities in order to effectively represent consumers.

This information is adopted from *Consumer Representation on Boards and Committees: A GUIDE FOR CONSUMERS*: Western Australian Consumer Advisory Council; Department of Consumer and Employment Protection.