

RISK MANAGEMENT

Background

The Health Consumers' Council is an independent community based organisation, representing the consumers' 'voice' in health policy, planning, research and service delivery. The Council advocates on behalf of consumers to government, doctors, other health professionals, hospitals and the wider health system.

The objective of this policy is to:

- (a) outline the process by which the HCC manages risk; and
- (b) identify the risks which may arise as part of the HCC's activities, and consider strategies for reducing these risks.

To develop this policy the HCC used the Community RiskBase tool developed by RiskCover WA which is available from the Insurance Commission of WA's website:

www.icwa.wa.gov.au

Process

Risk management involves:

- (a) risk identification;
- (b) risk assessment – likelihood and consequences;
- (c) identification and implementation of strategies to reduce risk; and
- (d) ongoing monitoring and review.

As part of the HCC's ongoing monitoring and review of risks a risk audit will be undertaken annually, this policy will be reviewed at least once annually.

The Health Consumers' Council has identified the following risks and adopted strategies to minimise the risk:

1. Staff

1.1 Loss of key personnel

The Health Consumers' Council has adopted the following measures to minimise the risk:

- 1.1.1 In terms of employment, notice periods and arrangements for staff leave to minimise disruption

- 1.1.2 Succession planning policy and process for the Executive Director developed in 2008, will be reviewed in 2010 will be reviewed in 2010.
- 1.1.3 Ongoing education and training for all staff in multitasking so staff become familiar with all roles in the organisation.

1.2 Injury and Sickness

Premises, equipment and the office vehicle are maintained regularly and staff/volunteers are encouraged to report physical hazards. The Health Consumers' Council has produced guidelines for dealing with aggressive clients. The Executive Director and Deputy Director also provide mentoring, guidance and support to all staff. In addition the Health Consumers' Council is cognisant of the stress on particular staff members and ensures access to independent support/counselling at no cost to staff.

The Council has the appropriate amount of sick leave provisions for staff and encourage staff with infectious conditions to take leave rather than spread illness in the office.

The Health Consumers' Council has up to date and comprehensive Workers' Compensation and Professional Indemnity cover.

Workers Compensation	Commercial Union – Established Salary \$210,000 adjusted retrospectively
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The Council is developing an Occupational Health and Safety Policy that will focus particular attention on the Advocacy and Consumer Representation activities.

1.3 Dishonesty and Inappropriate Conduct

The Health Consumers' Council has developed a Code of Conduct for all staff, Board members and HCC members. In addition, the Council has systems and policies in place to check the unauthorised use of mobile phones, petty cash, petrol credit card and taxi vouchers. The Office Manager is required to notify the Executive Director of any untoward or unexplained costs in these areas and the Executive Director must immediately carry out an investigation with a report to the HCC Board and action undertaken.

2. Insurance

The Health Consumers' Council has the following insurance policies to safeguard the organisation from claims and legal action.

Motor Vehicle	Western QBE – Comprehensive maximum legal limit \$20k
Business	QBE, CIC, CUI & Zurich <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Liability - \$10m • Product Liability - \$10m • Burglary - \$10k • Glass - replacement

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire • Electrical Equip – \$25k • Club members extension
Directors and Officers	CGU Any claim jointly against wrongful act against Board - \$10m

3. Facilities and equipment

Theft or damage

The Health Consumers' Council is committed to the responsible use of facilities and equipment. The Council has appropriate insurance cover for loss and damages, and through shared staff responsibility minimises the likelihood of theft. Theft and fraud are offences that would result in dismissal as outlined in Health Consumers' Council Contract of Employment with all staff.

4. Loss

4.1 Financial Loss

The Health Consumers' Council is funded by the WA Government and the Australian Government. Loss of funding due to a change in government policy or to a third party NGO receiving funding for activities instead of HCC, is a real and ongoing risk whilst HCCC is dependent on government funding as its only source of funding. The measures that HCC has established to reduce this risk are to establish and maintain a strong reputation for providing a direct service to the public with independence and integrity. The HCC will maintain close relationships with Director General of Health, the Minister of Health and other partners in government, not-for-profit NGOs, the private sector, the university sector and the community in general.

The Health Consumers' Council is bi-partisan, independent and authoritative and will maintain that approach.

In addition, the Council will maintain and expand coalitions of support for consumer participation across WA and strengthen affiliations with other health consumer organisations such as CHF and keep abreast of international trends.

4.2 Loss of Premises

The Health Consumers' Council is a tenant in the current premises at Wellington Fair. Loss of premises is a major risk for HCC but is unlikely to occur due to a clear lease period, development of a compliance checklist which reminds staff of the lease renewal period and use of diary for notice periods. The Board has established an Accommodation Committee to review current and future accommodation needs. The Council will design a process in the event of loss of premises due to damage to premises.

4.3 Technological Failure

The Health Consumers' Council is reliant on a range of information and communication technologies for providing services to consumers and maintaining

relationships with partner organisations. The Council employs an IT consultant who established our system and is available for assistance in a timely way. The Council backs up all information on a daily basis.

4.4 Loss or damage to motor vehicle

The Health Consumers' Council has one motor vehicle available for all staff to use for work purposes. The car is insured, all drivers of the car (staff) are notified to the insurance company and all staff using the vehicle must have a current licence.

4.5 Reputation Loss

The Health Consumers' Council has a high media profile and sometimes is requested to deal publicly with highly contentious issues. It should be noted that according to the Health Consumers' Council Rules of Association, the only people who can speak on behalf of Health Consumers' Council to the media, are the Chairperson, the Executive Director or the Deputy Director. Public comment should reflect health consumer rights and principles. The Council recognises the risk that public comment may alienate a group of consumers or a community group and as a result may receive negative publicity. The Council will ensure that relationships and partnerships with consumers and community groups are conducted with mutual respect and openness to minimise this risk.

There is also a risk to Health Consumers' Council of exposure to reputation loss through the Advocacy and Consumer Representation services provided. The Council has developed a comprehensive Advocacy policy and Code of Conduct for Advocates to minimise the risk.

There is also a risk to Health Consumers' Council of Consumer Representatives purporting to speak on behalf of the Council and making comments which are attribute to the Council as a result, it is possible some claims such as defamation could be made against the Council. Most Consumer Representatives have undertaken training provided by HCC.

All Consumer Representatives and the Chairs of Committees have received the following information

“Consumer representatives need to be aware that although they have been nominated or endorsed by HCC, no Consumer Representative may represent or act on behalf of the Health Consumers' Council or its members.

The Health Consumers' Council is always happy to provide support, advice and information as well as mentoring to Consumer Representatives but HCC cannot be, and is not responsible for the words or behaviour of Consumers Representatives.”

Health Consumers' Council has developed a Code of Conduct policy that will apply to all staff and HCC members and be widely promoted across the organisation.

5. Litigation

Third party and staff claims including defamation may arise as a result of the Health Consumers' Council activities. The Health Consumers' Council recognises its obligations and responsibilities to members, staff and the broader community. The Council has comprehensive insurance cover (see below) and a range of policy directions eg Complaints policy, Code of Conduct policy, Media policy to minimise

exposure to third party claims including defamation. The Council recruits, supports and trains staff for the work of the organisation.

Professional Indemnity	<p>CGU Claims made by 3rd parties against Board, staff, members & volunteers - \$10m</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Libel and slander • Loss documents • Fraud and dishonesty • One automatic reinstatement • Trade Practices Act/Fair Trading Acts
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6 Non compliance – Funding contracts and regulation

The Health Consumers’ Council developed a Code of Conduct, a Compliance Checklist and ensures the use of front office diary to note audit reports, contract reports and notification to Department of Commerce (Consumer Protection) of any changes after Annual General Meeting. The Council provides training to Board members and staff to ensure understanding of rules and responsibilities and involves external advisors when appropriate (audit, industrial relations).

The Board is developing a list of applicable legislation for Board members staff.

7. Political

The Health Consumers’ Council is at risk of losing independence through tension between representing health consumers and being funded by the State and Commonwealth governments. The Council has operated effectively for 15 years by building and maintaining close relationships with all stakeholders and partners. In addition the Council has developed and implemented a Code of Conduct for members and staff and has a comprehensive suite of policies to guide the organisation.

8. Members

The Health Consumers’ Council is a membership organisation and always runs the risk of alienating members and losing members. The Council actively builds and maintains close relationships with members by health Issues Group, Public Forums and events at least four (4) times a year and keeps members informed through production of *Health Matters* four (4) times a year.

In addition, the Council must balance the views of the HCC membership with the community as a whole. The Council actively builds and maintains close relationships with all partners and stakeholders including members and community as a whole. In addition the Council has developed and implemented a Code of Conduct for all HCC members and staff.