

# DHAC/ LHAC Newsletter

November/ December 2011

Health Consumers' Council WA Inc, Unit 13/14 Wellington Fair, 40 Lord Street, East Perth [www.hconc.org.au](http://www.hconc.org.au) , Ph: 08 9221 3422 or Freecall (country): 1800 620 780



## Highlights in this Issue

- **Advocacy Corner:**  
Report on the Esperance Community Forum –  
Written by Pieter di Marco...page 2
- **Bunbury Community Forum** – report by William Troff and Pieter di Marco
- **Rural and Regional Health Australia** to lead the way to better health for country people
- **HCC's Christmas morning tea and 2011 Health Consumers Council Excellence Awards**

## Letter from the editor

Welcome to the Christmas edition of the DHAC and LHAG E-newsletter!

Evergreen boughs that fill our homes  
With fragrant Christmas scents,  
Hearts filled with the loving glow  
That Christmas represents;  
Christmas cookies, turkeys stuffed,  
Festive holly berry,  
Little faces bright with joy,  
Loved ones being merry;  
Parties, songs, beribboned gifts,  
Silver bells that tinkle,  
Christmas trees and ornaments,  
Colorful lights that twinkle;  
Relatives waiting with open arms  
To smile and hug and kiss us;  
These are some of the special joys  
That come along with Christmas.

*By Joanna Fuchs*

<http://www.poemsource.com/Christmas-poems.html>

Christmas is fast approaching and the holidays are near. As 2011 draws to a close, we would like to thank all DHAC and LHAG members for your continued interest in consumer participation and support for the Health Consumers' Council. We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and look forward to seeing you again in 2012.

**Kind regards**  
**Caroline Rugdee**  
**Speakers Bureau Coordinator**



## Advocacy Corner

### Report on the Esperance Community Forum – Written by Pieter Di Marco

The Esperance Community Forum implemented by the Health Consumers' Council WA was held on the 13<sup>th</sup> December 2011 at the Gumtree Christian Fellowship. It was the second forum conducted in Esperance by the Aboriginal Consumer Participation Program after a recent community consultation in Bunbury. This community meeting aimed to follow up on recommendations made from the initial Esperance forum and track progress. The Aboriginal Consumer Participation Program Officer was assisted by the Advocacy department to help bring awareness to consumers' of their rights when accessing health service providers. The Community Forum aims to highlight gaps in indigenous health by holding a platform where health service providers and community members can come together to discuss issues and raise concerns in an attempt to identify possible solutions.

The community forum was attended by a wide range of health service providers and approximately 30 community members to discuss issues in the region as concerns had been raised previously by community members regarding service delivery in Esperance. Identifying areas of concern in a selected population and developing solutions to them is the key to ensuring equitable health access for members of that community. Progress from the initial community consultation saw a Health Reference Group established which would aim to identify issues and enhance communication between providers and consumers. Furthermore, Mental Health Workers were highlighted as need for the area and steps have been taken to open these positions.

## Health Consumers' Council Advocacy Services

The Health Consumers' Council is an independent community based organisation representing the consumer's voice in health policy, planning, research and service delivery.

The Health Consumers' Council provides free assistance to consumers in Western Australia in order to resolve recent grievances related to health care. The Council will provide general advice, information, referral options and advocacy services in a manner that is helpful, timely and efficient. The Council has a toll free phone line for consumers who live in regional areas.

Our advocacy service consists of three advocates who are able to assist consumers who have a range of problems or challenges within the health system: The principal aim of the Advocacy service is to ensure that health consumers are always treated with dignity and fairness. Advocates may provide assistance to consumers in accessing health services to meet their needs, as well as assisting in making complaints. For example, advocates will assist consumers draft letters or complaints to address their concerns within the health care system, or will attend meetings or consultations with health consumers acting as an advocate or independent third party.

The Council also undertakes more systemic advocacy which involves action designed to achieve changes in policy, practice and attitudes towards health consumers in the WA health system.

Our goal is the improvement of health care systems leading to better health outcomes for consumers. We are ready to assist you in your dealings with consumers and we would be pleased if you would encourage consumers to contact us.

Accordingly, our advocacy brochures are available for your information and can be accessed by clicking [on the following link:](http://www.hconc.org.au/ourservices/Advocacy_brochure/Advocacy1.pdf) [http://www.hconc.org.au/ourservices/Advocacy\\_brochure/Advocacy1.pdf](http://www.hconc.org.au/ourservices/Advocacy_brochure/Advocacy1.pdf) . We have a toll free number for regional consumers which is 1800 620 780.

If you have any questions with regard to any of the above, please feel free to contact Michele Kosky at 9221 3422 or [michele.kosky@hconc.org.au](mailto:michele.kosky@hconc.org.au) .

### **The economic viability of utilising interpreter services in a health care setting - By Louise Ford**

For a number of years I have been hearing about the cost of using interpreters; not only the cost in dollars but the cost in time. These comments come not only from the health sector; they waft from practically anywhere that mainstream orientated services, government and non-government, are having contact with people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds (CaLD)...[More...](#)

## Bunbury Community Forum

### Koombana Bay Sailing Club

25<sup>th</sup> October 2011

The community forum was attended by a wide range of agencies which included Government organisations, non Government organisations and researchers. The purpose was to consult with community members in the region as concerns had been raised previously by community members regarding service delivery in the South West. The forum was organised to obtain information from a community perspective and to assist in developing a more positive relationship with health service providers. Identifying areas of concern in a selected population and developing solutions to them is the key to ensuring equitable health access for members of that community. The forum did not receive the representation from local community members that was anticipated but this did not hinder the discussion, as the health service provider's present articulated concerns they had experienced from their work in the community.

Amongst the participants in attendance a robust debate was conducted on the issues that were perceived to be a priority throughout the region. A number of concerns were raised with the issues of transport and failing to attend appointments....

highlighted as the most pressing problems throughout the area. Michael Saunders the Allied Health Manager from Bunbury Hospital spoke of the difficulty in employing Aboriginal men to the position of Aboriginal Liaison Officer (ALO) and acknowledged there could be improvements in the way they deal with Indigenous people who access the hospital. Michael also explained the addition of Sue Henry as the (ALO) for Bunbury Hospital was achieving positive results.

Marlene Sykes from (WACHS) highlighted the number of complaints made by Aboriginal people regarding the quality of service they receive from the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (ACCHO) are not addressed. The possible reasons identified for this were complaints against the (ACCHO) could have repercussions for individuals within their local community, Aboriginal people may not know their rights as a health consumer, individuals may not know where to go for assistance and the process for formalising a complaint can be lengthy.

Other issues raised included the absence of a detoxification centre in the South West which forced clients to travel to Perth, which led to further complications such as accommodation arrangements on discharge and individuals possibly reverting to prior habits.

The (WACHS) also raised the topic of funding available under Area 5 in relation to Fixing the Gap and Improving the Patient's Journey which includes (ALO), Aboriginal Patient Discharge and the Regional Aboriginal Patient Transport Strategy. They highlighted Area 5 funding was not allocated to the South West and if funding for closing the Gap were to continue, service providers would be able to submit funding proposals with the aim of alleviating the transport issue in the South West with the community advocating in partnership with them for this outcome.

Though there were no community members present some possible outcomes explored included a research project to examine the effectiveness of indigenous access to specialist treatment in the South West. Having two representatives at the forum from the Val Lishman health research centre with a wealth of research knowledge could be utilised and forum representatives could join together and be the advisory committee for any such project.

The Health Consumers' Councils (BCF) was attended by nine Health Service Providers which included Red Cross, West Australian Country Health Service, GP Down South, Greater Bunbury Division of General Practice and South West Women's Health. The lack of representation from local community members was disappointing but this did not hinder strong discussion of the issues raised. It was also a fantastic opportunity to engage a large number of agencies to examine concerns affecting Aboriginal people's health and wellbeing.

The issues highlighted as most important to the South West region were transport and failure to attend appointments. Other areas raised were the absence of a South West detoxification centre, obstacles Aboriginal people encounter when attempting to make a complaint and the low participation rate of Indigenous males employed as liaison officers. Results from the (BCF) were encouraging and changing the approach and implementation to account for Bunbury's different demographic would merit consideration for future community forums in this region.



NATIONAL RURAL  
HEALTH  
ALLIANCE INC.

## Media Release

4 November 2011

### ***Rural and Regional Health Australia* to lead the way to better health for country people**

The establishment of *Rural and Regional Health Australia*, announced today by Health Minister Nicola Roxon, is a major step forward for the health and wellbeing of rural and remote Australians.

The new agency in the Department of Health and Ageing will lead work within health and across other departments to ensure a stronger „whole of government“ approach to the urgent task of improving health and health services in the bush.....[More](#)



NATIONAL RURAL  
HEALTH  
ALLIANCE INC.



### **AIHW / NRHA art competition**

Do you live in rural Australia? Do you like to paint? Would you like your artwork to appear on the cover of Australia's health 2012?

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, in partnership with the National Rural Health Alliance, is conducting an art competition to source cover art for AIHW's publications. The theme for the artwork is the health and wellbeing of Australians.

Eligible entrants are people living in rural, regional and remote Australia. Four prizes of \$1,000, \$500, \$300 and \$200 are offered for winning artists. Entries close 5.00pm (EDST) Friday 6 January 2012

Full details and application form available on the Alliance website:

[www.ruralhealth.org.au](http://www.ruralhealth.org.au)

## Are you looking for a Speaker?

Healthcare can be complicated and confusing. It can be hard to understand how the different elements of the health system fit together. And it can be hard to understand what's going on with your health and the treatment you might need.

When we see a doctor, many of us feel that we shouldn't take too much time and that we shouldn't ask too many questions. This may particularly be the case for those patients whose needs are greatest, such as people with disabilities, Aboriginal people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and the elderly.

But the fact is we all need to be active participants in our healthcare. We should feel comfortable about asking questions, and we should know our rights and responsibilities as health consumers and patients.

The more knowledge we have about the way healthcare works, the better we can navigate the system and interact with healthcare staff. Patient consent is a key principle of healthcare, and that consent must be based on clear information and decision making.

By being more engaged and informed consumers, we can contribute to safer healthcare and better health outcomes.

The Health Consumers' Council (HCC) is an independent community based organisation, representing the consumers' voice in health policy, planning, research and service delivery.

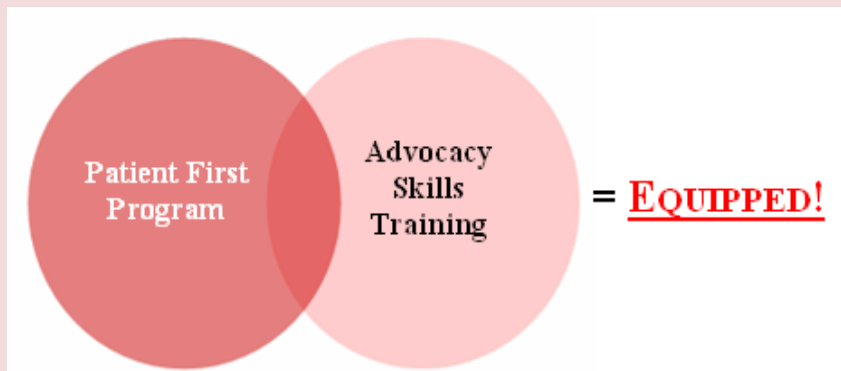
HCC advocates on behalf of consumers to doctors, other health professionals, hospitals and the wider health system. For further information about the Council, see <http://www.hconc.org.au>.

HCC has volunteer speakers available to provide free information sessions on:

- Using WA's health system
- Your rights and responsibilities as a health consumer
- Where to go if you are having difficulties using the health system
- The Health Consumers' Council, its Advocacy services, Consumer Participation and Speakers' Bureau Programmes and events
- How you can get involved

Information sessions last approximately half an hour with the opportunity for questions.

If you are interested in hosting an information session and improving community health through increased health system literacy, contact Caroline Rugdee on 9221 3422 or [caroline.rugdee@hconc.org.au](mailto:caroline.rugdee@hconc.org.au).



**How well equipped is your country health service?**

**To find out more about advocacy and how your DHAC can implement the Patient First Program, email Caroline at [caroline.rugdee@hconc.org.au](mailto:caroline.rugdee@hconc.org.au).**

## We've Got Something to Hoot About!

*The Health Consumers' Council is an independent community based organisation representing the consumers' voice in health policy, planning, research & service delivery*

Our wise team of volunteer speakers are keen to get on their perch and present to your group!

Talks last 30 minutes with the opportunity for questions. The topics covered include:

- The WA health system
- Health consumer's rights
- Emerging issues for patients & families
- Health Consumers' Council services & activities
- Health System Literacy



**Knowledge is power. If you're interested in hosting a talk & improving community health through increased health literacy contact Caroline on 9221 3422 or [caroline.rugdee@hconc.org.au](mailto:caroline.rugdee@hconc.org.au)**



NATIONAL RURAL  
HEALTH  
ALLIANCE INC.



## **AJRH - December issue now on line**

This issue leads with a thoughtful editorial on assessment in rural health professional education and a major review article on gaps in research on urban and rural suicide. Six original articles examine a range of topics including: high stakes examinations in a rural clinical school; travel-related burden and financial difficulties for cancer patients; rural maternity care and health policy; and Asian migrants' experience of western medical health care. Abstracts of articles are on open access and subscribers have access to all articles in Australian Journal of Rural Health.

### **Policy**

The establishment of Rural and Regional Health Australia is important news for rural health and the Alliance looks forward to being involved in its work, particularly its whole-of-government advocacy.

Submissions currently being prepared relate to the ASGC-RA system and the Senate's consideration of its role for health workforce; the VET sector and health workforce; and a national approach to the prevention and management of Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. The Alliance has joined with the Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association and Catholic Health Australia in consultations relating to the future activity of the Independent Hospital Pricing Authority, including how that work will affect smaller hospitals and MPSs.

The Alliance is promoting action on its **revised plan** for the ruralisation of junior doctor training. Alliance staff will be in Adelaide on 9 December for a meeting of Health Workforce Australia's Expert Reference Group for the National Regional and Remote Health Workforce Reform and Innovation Strategy.

The Alliance's submission on **fly-in, fly-out** workforce practices will be the basis of evidence to be given to a public hearing of the House of Representatives Committee in early 2012.

The **Alliance submission** to the exposure draft legislation for the Personally Controlled Electronic Health Record is posted on the **yourhealth website**. The resulting legislation has been referred to the Senate Community Affairs Committee and submissions are due by 12 January 2012.

*Your Voice on Health*

## HEALTH CONSUMERS' COUNCIL

# ADVOCACY & PATIENT FIRST TRAINING PROGRAMME

---

### Interested in Advocacy and Patient First?

The Health Consumers' Council provides this workshop to all DHAC members at no cost. With this information, DHAC members are in a better position to advocate for changes in the health system, ensuring the needs of consumers are met. Topics covered include the rights of health consumers, as well as different types of advocacy, like systemic advocacy.

We also provide information and training on implementing the Patient First Programme in your Health District.

Contact Caroline Rugdee on 9221 3422 or email [caroline.rugdee@hconc.org.au](mailto:caroline.rugdee@hconc.org.au) if you would like to:

- ★ Arrange for this training to be provided at your health district area; or
- ★ If your community is interested in a brief overview of this training: this can be delivered face to face or via a video conference.

## The 2011 Health Consumers' Council's Consumers Excellence Awards goes to...



**Peter Franklin**

for his strong commitment to community participation and consumer engagement in the Kwinana Childrens' Respiratory Health Study 2008 – 2011



**Ann Banks**

Outstanding contribution as Chairperson of the Health Issues Group, HCC board member and Consumer Representative



**From the Heart Incorporated**

For providing support, understanding and information to women, partners and families affected by stress and depression related to pregnancy, childbirth and the addition of a new child to the family



**Bob Patterson**

Long time active member of the Health Consumers' Council and an outstanding Consumer Representative for many years on the Sir Charles Gairdner Community Advisory Council, the Cardiovascular Network Council and EHealth Consumer and Community Reference group



**Clare Mullen**

Excellent commitment to communication with carers and consumers, whether in the area of patient safety, activity based funding, consumer engagement or models of care



**Dr Simon Towler and Jenni Ibrahim**

Dr Simon Towler has led by example in the inclusion and valuing of consumer participation across all health networks, and in the Information Communications Technology area including EHealth. Simon practices what he preaches and believes that consumer participation value adds to improve the quality and safety of services

Jenni has worked tirelessly as a consumer advocate in Chronic Conditions, Respiratory Network, Data Linkage and as a member of HCC's Speakers Bureau



# HCC Christmas Morning Tea



**WA Health Awards 2011 Finalist – Patient First Picture Book Guide**



**Christmas gathering of HCC Board members, HCC members, staff and guests**



**Gio Terni and Billy Trott**



**HCC staff**



**Morning Tea**



**From left, Pieter di Marco, Laura Elkin and Billy Trott**



**Award ceremony**

## Dates for your diary

Day	OCCASION/NOTE	TIME	ADDRESS*	Contact for Information
Thursday 2 February 2012	Health Issues Group HIG	1.00pm – 3.00pm	Health Consumers' Council Crn Lord and Wellington St East Perth	Louise Ford Tel: 9221 3422 Email: <a href="mailto:louise.ford@hconc.org.au">louise.ford@hconc.org.au</a>
Wednesday 15 February 2012	Training - Cultural Competency for the Health Sector	9.30am – 12.30pm	Health Consumers' Council Crn Lord and Wellington St East Perth	Louise Ford Tel: 9221 3422 Email: <a href="mailto:louise.ford@hconc.org.au">louise.ford@hconc.org.au</a>
Thursday 1 March 2012	Community Forum	1.00pm – 3.00pm	To be advised	Louise Ford Tel: 9221 3422 Email: <a href="mailto:louise.ford@hconc.org.au">louise.ford@hconc.org.au</a>
Saturday 10 and Friday 16 March 2012	Speakers' Bureau Training	9.00am – 3.00pm	Health Consumers' Council Crn Lord and Wellington St East Perth	Caroline Rugdee Tel: 9221 3422 Email: <a href="mailto:caroline.rugdee@hconc.org.au">caroline.rugdee@hconc.org.au</a>
Saturday 17 March 2012	Consumer Representative Skills Training	9.30am – 3.30pm	Health Consumers' Council Crn Lord and Wellington St East Perth	Louise Ford Tel: 9221 3422 Email: <a href="mailto:louise.ford@hconc.org.au">louise.ford@hconc.org.au</a>

If your DHAC would like to contribute information and articles for the next issue of this e-Newsletter, please send them through to us via email: [info@hconc.org.au](mailto:info@hconc.org.au) or by post: Reply Paid, GPO Box C134 Perth WA 6839

Please circulate this bi-monthly newsletter to those who might be interested. For an online copy: [www.hconc.org.au/ourservices/DHAC.html](http://www.hconc.org.au/ourservices/DHAC.html)