

JANUARY 2009 ISSUE

DHAC Newsletter



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Welcome

Welcome to the First Issue of 2009 District Health Advisory Councils (DHAC) e-newsletter.

Everyone at the Health Consumers' Council wishes you all the best in the New Year.

We provide you with a monthly DHAC e-newsletters to help support DHACs in their work.

The role of the Health Consumers Council (HCC):

- HCC enables consumers to have their say in the way that health services, policies and programs are developed.
- We are funded by WACHS (WA Country Health Service) to inform DHACs of current health issues both in rural and metro areas, and how they can contribute to the development of the WA health system.

The monthly DHAC e-newsletters are designed to:

- Provide DHACs with up to date health information
- Inform DHACs on what metropolitan Community Advisory Councils are doing and to advise on how DHACs could look at working on the same issues in their region
- To provide a forum for DHACs to inform other DHACs of the issues they are facing as well as of their current projects and accomplishments.

If you have any items of interest that you would like to share with other DHACs, please send them through to jess.braithwaite@hconc.org.au

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HCC seeks to enable consumers to have their say in the way that health services, policies and programs are developed.



The Health Consumers' Council

TELEPHONE: (08) 9221-3422
FREE CALL: 1800 620 780

Rural Article One:

National Continence Helpline

Consumers living in rural and remote areas often have trouble with distances to health services. Not so with bladder and bowel problems.

The National Continence Helpline (1800 33 00 66) is staffed by experienced continence nurse advisors. They provide excellent information about treatment options for incontinence, 'at home' strategies, assistance with finding products and where to get them by mail, or advice on eligibility for continence product funding schemes. There's a wide range of leaflets on a variety of continence topics that can be mailed out. These resources cover HCRRA Newsletter November 2008 incontinence issues from childhood bed-wetting, problems experienced by young men and women, in middle-aged women, problems relating to pregnancy and childbirth, and for men, prostates-related urinary problems. All age groups right through to aged care are covered, including information for carers at home.

The service is available across Australia via a free and confidential phone call and is managed for the Australian Government by the Continence Foundation of Australia.' The Continence Foundation website can be viewed at www.continence.org.au.

There is also an Australian Government site at www.bladderbowel.gov.au. If you do not have internet on your mobile or computer, phone the National Continence Helpline on 1800 33 00 66 to be mailed the toilet location maps for your planned travel route.



Rural Health Services Report

January to June 2008

The Health Consumers' Council (HCC) exists to represent the voice of consumers in health policy, planning, research and service delivery. One way it does this is through the recruiting, training and appointing of Consumer Representatives on to advisory committees within the WA health system. Another way is through the provision of an advocacy service to individuals experiencing difficulties within the health system. A question often asked by HCC members is how do these two functions fit together?

This short report aims to advise District Health Advisory Council (DHAC) members about the types of complaints received by HCC from 1 January to 30 June 2008 and how this information can be useful to them. Information for this report is sourced from the "Rural Health Services Report for January to June 2008" from the Health Consumers' Council.

Statistics:

- HCC received **28** new rural health advocacy cases during the period 1 January to 30 June 2008. Advocacy cases arise when people have serious concerns/complaints about the health system in WA.
- **20** cases were located in public hospitals and health services
- **8** related to private hospitals and health services
- **15** were classified as non-health complaints
- Issues relating to **treatment, rights, access, redress** were of most concern to consumers. Redress refers to "the act of seeking to have things put right and to obtain a resolution".
- The most common type of **treatment** issues raised by health consumers included:
 - Rough and uncaring
 - Injury / adverse outcome
 - Pain ignored
 - Poor standard

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Summary
Report
from the
Health
Consumers'
Council



- The most common **Rights** issue raised by health consumers involved consumers asking for Consumer Rights Information.
- **Access** issues of concern to health consumers included:
 - Travel costs
 - No service / unmet need
- Of all **health providers** the most complained about (in order of priority) were:
 - Medical Practitioners (43%)
 - Health Service Administration – due to dissatisfaction with the Patient Assisted Travel Scheme (PATS)
 - Government Health Administration
 - Dentists
- The most common **settings** for consumer concerns were:

Rural Public

- Medical – hospital inpatient and outpatient
- Emergency Departments

Rural Private

- General Practice
- Aboriginal Medical Service
- Mental Health Inpatient
- Specialist Rooms
- Day Surgery
- Residential Facility

Summary:

A significant number of new rural health service complaints are made by consumers every six months. This shows that there is large scope for change within the delivery of health services to consumers, particularly as treatment and access issues continue to be of great concern. This further highlights and supports the need for DHACs to represent consumer interests in order to facilitate positive change towards the creation of a consumer-focused health care system that is responsive to the needs of the community.

The complete “Rural Health Services Report for January to June 2008” is available from the Health Consumers’ Council via (08) 9221 3422 or iess.braithwaite@hconc.org.au.



Media Release

12 November 2008



NATIONAL RURAL
HEALTH
ALLIANCE INC.

Call for moratorium on rural maternity service closures

The peak non-government body for rural and remote health has called for a moratorium on the closure of maternity services in rural and regional communities.

“The fact that rural birthing options are becoming increasingly limited is of great concern to families and rural communities and ought to be a matter of concern to the health sector, the Treasury and society at large,” the National Rural Health Alliance said in a submission to the Rudd Government’s National Maternity Services Review.

Across rural Australia an estimated 130 maternity centres have closed in the past 10 years. This is despite the fact that a healthy pregnancy, a birth that is managed with appropriate care and an optimum beginning to life are key determinants of the long term health of every individual.

“Investment in maternity services yields high returns for individuals, families and the nation. The obverse is that poor prenatal and birthing experiences may impose costs for life and are likely to involve many in the health care sector who are not directly involved in maternity services,” the submission said.

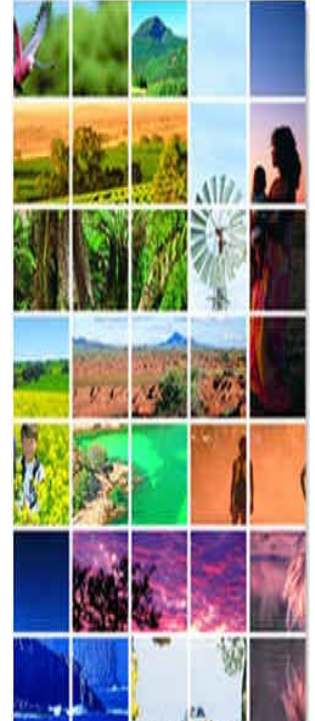
Titled *The Importance of Birthing in the Bush*, it backs the establishment of a National Maternity Services Plan and supports the philosophy that women be assisted to feel ‘in control’ not only in pregnancy, but in childbirth and during the postnatal stage.

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Alliance Chair, Dr Jenny May, said the submission makes a strong call for reinvestment in maternity services in rural areas. "A widespread network of maternity services would help sustain country hospitals as well as the rural, regional and remote communities that depend on their services," she said.

"The absence of nursing services is seen as a disincentive for people of child-bearing age to move to or remain in rural communities. Reduction in services impedes regional development, which has a consequent and long-term negative impact on rural health outcomes generally," Dr May said.

Other factors proposed for improved birthing in the bush include greater support for all health professions involved in maternity services, and the replication of models of birthing services that have already been shown to work well. The Alliance also called for the electronic retention of routine data collected during pregnancy, birth and in the first five years of life, and for a no-fault insurance scheme to reduce the cost to clinicians and taxpayers in the event of adverse outcomes.



Health Consumers' Council Membership



Our mission

To promote quality health services in Western Australia.

The Health Consumers' Council would like to encourage you to become a member. There are many benefits to becoming a member, besides the fact that it is totally free!

As a member of the Health Consumers' Council you will:

- Be kept up to date about health issues
- Be able to have your say on health policy and on the way that health services are delivered
- Receive free *Health Matters* magazines
- Be able to go on our distribution list so you can find out about all the events other consumers and the Health Consumers' Council are involved in

If you would like to become a member, please call Jess Braithwaite on (08) 9221 3422 or Free Call 1800 620 780 and we will send out the appropriate forms.

The Health Consumers Council also has a website: www.hconc.org.au Visit the website today to find up to date health issues, relevant links and lots of interesting information.

Seeking Input from DHACs

Dear DHACs, we are seeking an update of what is going on in your area so we can see if there is a trend of a problem occurring across the State. Can you send us the top three issues relating to health care faced by consumers in your region to include in next months update?

Final Note from The Health Consumers' Council for 2008

The Health Consumers' Council is willing and able to help DHAC's in the planning and implementation of any initiatives your DHAC may wish to work on in 2009.

The Health Consumers' Council and WA Country Health Service encourages your DHAC to focus on one main project in 2009 in any of the following areas that will benefit consumers in your region.

- patient safety
 - Patient First Program
- Health Promotion:
 - Identify what consumers want in your region.

What is the main issue you would like help with in 2009? We are here to support you, so please give us a call or drop us an email.

Email: jess.braithwaite@hconc.org.au



The Health Consumers' Council



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Courtesy Brendan Jubb