



# Annual Report

## 2025

**Let's make healthcare fair!**

# Health Consumers' Council WA

## Annual Report 2025

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

### Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge and deeply respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we live and work – particularly the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation. We honour Elders past and present and recognise the strength and wisdom of emerging leaders.

**We acknowledge and recognise that sovereignty was never ceded.**

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### Acknowledgement of Lived Experience and Diversity and Inclusion

As a community-led organisation we recognise and value the lived and learned experience, insight and expertise of people living with health challenges and who access health services. Our voices and contributions are vital at every level, and we thank everyone in our community who shares their personal perspectives, and works alongside health staff in the pursuit of better health outcomes for all.

We're committed to creating inclusive, welcoming spaces for all – for our staff, consumers and communities – regardless of background, gender, sexuality, culture, body or ability. We stand against systemic discrimination and work actively to build a fairer, more respectful healthcare system for everyone in WA.

\*We use the term 'consumer' in its broadest sense to include health consumers, patients, people with lived experience, carers, family members, and community members.



## Vision, purpose and values

Since 1994, when consumer leaders seized the opportunity that was offered by the Minister for Health to “go it alone”, Health Consumers’ Council WA has existed to provide an independent voice for health consumers and the community on all aspects of health and healthcare.

### Our vision

Our vision is to create equitable, person-centered, quality health care, and improved health outcomes and experiences for everyone in WA.

### Our purpose

We amplify and champion the voices of WA health consumers to drive positive outcomes in health and healthcare.

### Our values

#### Equity and inclusivity

We actively seek out and elevate the voices of people who are disadvantaged by current systems and structures. Their perspectives are essential to shaping fairer, more responsive health services.

#### Compassion

Compassion is the heart of everything we do. We bring kindness to the work and the

way we treat each other. We care for our people so they can care for others.

#### Collaboration

We prioritise relationships as the key to making change happen. We seek to bring all voices and experiences into discussions.

#### Courage

We’re not afraid to stand up for consumer rights, even in the face of conflicting views

#### Care

We hold deep respect for the stories and perspectives shared with us by community members. We treat these with care and integrity, just as we do the public funds entrusted to us. We understand the privilege of doing this work and carry consumer stories with us in every encounter.

#### Integrity

As we hold health services to account, we also hold ourselves to the highest standards of ethics, transparency and integrity.

# 01. our impact



## Individual Advocacy Service

**1,249**

consumers were supported

**264**

significant individual advocacy cases

**909**

new consumers accessed our service

**4,560**

advocacy actions undertaken



## Systemic Advocacy

**55**

high level committees representing consumer perspectives

**96**

meetings with senior leaders, embedding consumer interests at senior level decisions

**24**

public comments in media

**23**

submissions made to ensure consumer interests shape state and national policies



## Consumer outreach and community building

**100**

opportunities for consumers voices shared through our networks

**25**

collaboration with organisations to elevate consumer voices

**3,971**

consumers are members of our networking channels

**66**

services were supported to recruit consumer representatives

**664**

people accessed networking, workshops and training

## ROI to our community

**\$4.77**  
**returned to**  
**Western**  
**Australians**

Every \$1 invested into our Individual advocacy service returns \$4.77 in value to Western Australians



\$1.00  
invested into our  
Individual Advocacy  
Service



Returns \$4.77 in value  
to the people of Western Australia

# 02. Welcome



*Clare Mullen*  
**Clare Mullen**  
Executive Director

## Report from Chair and Executive Director

### Your voice, our mission: placing consumers at the heart of healthcare

Every year in healthcare brings new challenges, but what drives us at Health Consumers' Council (HCCWA) is steadfast and simple: amplifying your voice to ensure that health and care truly work for you.

This year was a year of change and opportunity, with both State and Federal elections placing health at the forefront of public debate. These moments presented powerful platforms for consumer voices to be heard by those in positions to make real change. When the new ministerial teams stepped in, HCCWA was there, ensuring that health consumer and lived experiences and concerns were right at the centre of policy discussions. The creation of the new Preventative Health portfolio was a direct reflection of priorities we know matter to consumers.

Our advocacy, at every level, is fuelled by consumer stories—stories of long hospital waits, challenges in accessing primary care, and the daily hurdles faced by patients and families. This is why we continue to step up, speak out, and invite media opportunities: so consumer experiences shape the conversation and drive improvements.

### Joining up a fragmented system

We know that a disconnected healthcare system creates more barriers for consumers. That's why in 2024, HCCWA pushed for, and welcomed



*Melanie Gates*  
**Melanie Gates**  
Chair

collaboration between State and Federal governments to address structural issues. By sitting at the table alongside the Aboriginal Health Council of WA, WA Health, the Federal Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, and the WA Primary Health Alliance, we are making sure consumer needs guide system reform from the ground up and the top down.

We also travelled to regional communities, Kununurra, Broome, Port Hedland to hear first-hand how fragmentation impacts local healthcare journeys. These insights directly drive our advocacy, ensuring that reforms don't just look good on paper but make a tangible difference for people right across WA.

### Building Consumer Leadership

This year marked the first year of our new Strategic Plan, developed with input from our members, our team, and many stakeholders across the health sector. Already, this plan has influenced small but meaningful changes in how we work—changes that will strengthen our impact for years to come.

In line with our new strategy, we have invested in nurturing and connecting a circle of consumer leaders who are speaking up for consumers at both state and national levels to share perspectives and identify opportunities for systemic change. It's great to say that in WA we already have people who are strong consumer representatives who have

been involved in many of our Health Service Provider Boards, so we have strong foundations to build on.

### Strengthening HCCWA for you

To serve you better, we focused this year on strengthening HCCWA's capacity to be a strong and confident advocate for all consumers. New funding, including a \$250,000 allocation from the Department of Health and increased support from the Mental Health Commission, has allowed us to:

- Expand our individual advocacy service, supporting even more people to navigate the system and have their needs met
- Dedicate more time to backing the hundreds of consumer, carer, and lived experience representatives making a difference on committees and working groups
- Develop and roll out self-advocacy workshops, so you can feel even more confident taking charge of your health journey
- Appoint a Systemic Advocacy and Engagement Lead, to ensure that big-picture changes are grounded in real consumer experiences
- Invest in new team members focused on diversifying our income so we remain strong and independent
- Embrace digital technology, widening our reach to more communities

Pictured L-R: Raj Verma, Hon Minister Meredith Hammat, Dr Neale Fong, Dr Lachlan Henderson, Bryan Pine, Clare Mullen



## Raising the consumer voice

Often it seems that the strongest professional lobbies in health are those of clinicians, commercial organisations and other industry groups. We are very clear – to ensure genuine transformation – leading to better health outcomes for everyone in WA – it is vital that consumer, carer, lived experience and family voices are equally loud and strong. This requires a robust, well-supported consumer peak body—and that is what we continue to build.

## The HCCWA team

We thank outgoing Board members Mallika McLeod, Rebecca Carbone and Michael Crowley who stepped down in 2024, and we warmly welcomed new members at last year's AGM: Chair Melanie Gates, Deputy Chair Ricky Smith, and Directors Sarah Miller-Dyer and Tay Alers.

Organisations such as ours rely on both the lived and professional expertise of our Board members. Their commitment helps us remain agile, accountable and able to deliver meaningful impact.

The commitment and passion of the HCCWA team are truly inspiring. Whether navigating complex challenges, pioneering

new initiatives, or supporting individuals and communities, their dedication is the driving force behind the organisation's ability to champion meaningful change. It is through the expertise, empathy, and collaborative spirit of this team that HCCWA continues to amplify consumer voices and cultivate lasting improvements in the health system.

## Looking forward: The journey continues

As we reflect on the past year, one thing is clear: there is an ongoing and urgent need for connected, supported, and informed consumers to shape the future of health and care. Every conversation, every story, and every partnership brings us closer to a more person-centred, community-driven system.

Thank you to everyone—consumers, carers, staff, Board, partners, and supporters—who play a vital role in building the health system WA deserves. The work continues, and together, our collective voice will only grow stronger.



Pictured L-R: Clare Mullen, Hon Pierre Yang, Bronwyn Ife, Nurbek Jenalayev, Sam Arbon, Joe Staniszewski, Tania Harris, Harry Brooking

# 03. How we champion health consumer rights

## Our unique individual advocacy model

Each year, thousands of people in Western Australia face significant challenges when interacting with the healthcare system. Some experience serious events or suffer harm, while many struggle to access the care they need, or endure poor and frustrating experiences due to the complexity of navigating health services and gaps in the way these services are delivered.

We are proud to be the only organisation in Australia offering independent individual health advocacy across the entire healthcare system – public and private, physical and mental health – that is free at the point of delivery.

Our Advocacy service provides one-on-one support helping people to understand and assert their healthcare rights. We also help people to navigate the complex health system and the range of services that are available, and ensure their voices are heard in decisions that affect the treatment and care they receive. Where something has gone wrong in healthcare we back people up and walk alongside them as they seek answers, get redress, and try to make sure no-one else has the same poor experience.

Throughout the process, we help people build their knowledge and confidence by offering useful and practical information, tools and resources to support people to advocate for themselves and the people they care for. From our evaluation, 73%

of people surveyed from our service felt “more confident and empowered to self-advocate, make informed decisions and/or access support should you face another issue in the WA healthcare system”.

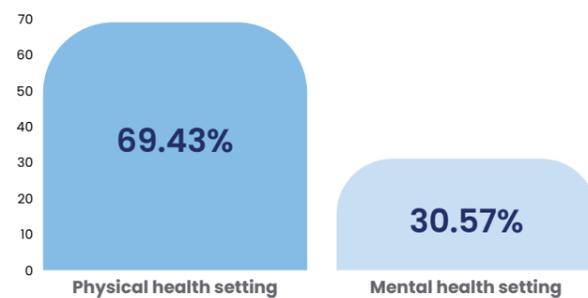
The additional fixed term funding we secured from WA Health and the Mental Health Commission was a much needed capacity boost across our Advocacy Service. The funds also allowed us to recruit a full time Advocacy Support Officer, which gave us the ability to be reactive to the increased demand we saw in advocacy cases this year, as well as significantly reduce our Advocacy Service waiting times.

HCCWA is committed to continuous learning and improvement and has started the process of a review of our Advocacy service. We are working with advocacy clients to build on our understanding of their experience of our service, what is working well and where we can improve.

## Main categories of support we provided this year

1. **38.57%**  
Issues with accessing services
2. **27.71%**  
Issues with diagnosis or treatment
3. **21.15%**  
Assistance with upholding health rights
4. **7.14%**  
Help to access medical records

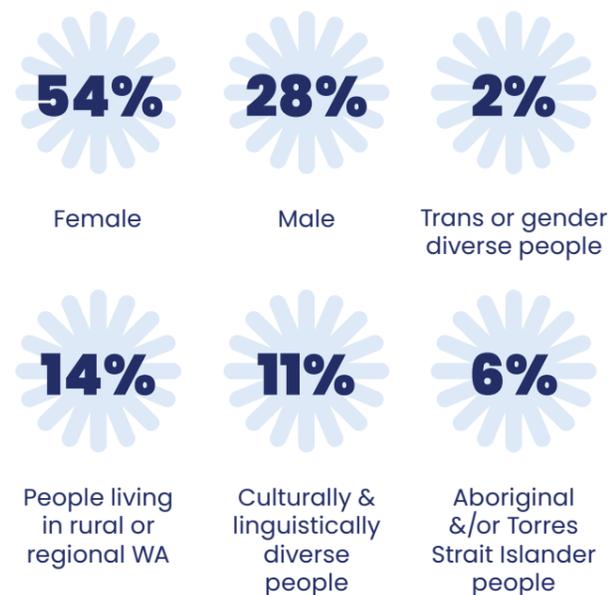
## Health setting the support was for



One of the things we've been able to do thanks to increased capacity is review how we triage incoming enquiries. We do this so that people from groups that experience high levels of unfair treatment, or people who are in a time-sensitive situation, are provided with support more promptly. Reviewing the number of enquiries in these categories, we've seen a significant increase in cases, that is cases that need a more timely response.



## Who accessed our individual advocacy services this year



"73% of people surveyed from our service felt "more confident and empowered to self-advocate, make informed decisions and/or access support should you face another issue in the WA healthcare system".



## Funding

Extra funding is helping HCCWA to help more West Australians.

A small addition in extra capacity has allowed us to review our triage systems for our individual advocacy service. We have made some headway in ensuring vulnerable populations are tended to more promptly.

However, over the course of the year we saw a significant increase in need for individual advocacy for Western Australians, especially in vulnerable cohorts who require a more timely response. We continue our efforts to do all we can within FTE constraints to keep up with the increased demand.

## What people say

"Thank you so so much for all of your help and support in this matter you truly are amazing and very helpful thank you for going above and beyond to help me with my learning disability to understand and spell check my email and thank you for always asking about how my health is. You are amazing. It is not often these days you find people that go above and beyond to help and you truly have so thank you so very much from the bottom of my heart."

"Thankyou so much for your time today, I called the right person and I appreciate your help and compassion in a free service too, makes me very grateful I've got you and your organisation to lean on for support if I need."

"Many thanks for all of your support - It has been such a help for me as I was truly so overwhelmed I was unable to do anything and it was impacting my wellbeing tremendously. I cannot thank you enough!!"

"I am struggling to reply in full or in a way that matches the immense gratitude I am feeling. But thank you so, so much. Reading your email, I got teary. You make it sound so matter of fact and easy, but my past experiences of trying to reach this level of communication and understanding with hospital staff has never left me feeling so reassured and hopeful and much of anything but dismayed and fearful... Thank you for showing me what I needed to ask and who to, and for giving me so many cheat sheets for keeping up with the practice for my future."

"thank you for the advocacy and support shown for consumer and his wife... All attendees appreciated your measured and reasonable approach so thank you for that as well." *A staff member at a WA hospital*





## Case study

### Advocacy for a traumatic postnatal emergency

- » Navigation support for complex complaint processes
- » System accountability
- » Driving system improvement
- » Listening to and amplifying consumer voices

A Western Australian consumer experienced a life-threatening series of complications in the hours and days following the delivery of her baby.

While the pregnancy and birth were uncomplicated and attended by two midwives, the consumer's condition deteriorated significantly after the birth, requiring admission to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). After discharge, further complications arose, leading to readmission and surgery.

The consumer's partner contacted Health Consumers' Council WA for support in navigating the healthcare complaint process.

With the consumer's consent and direction, our advocate provided guidance and assisted the family through navigating the hospital systems to place their healthcare complaint and to discuss their grievances.

HCCWA's support included:

- Providing information and guidance on how to request the consumer's medical records
- Advising on potential complaint pathways, liaising with the hospital to obtain information about their internal review process and conveying this to the consumer in a way they could understand in their state of trauma.
- The advocate provided support the consumer to prepare for, attend, and summarise the meeting outcomes with the hospital.

Through sustained advocacy, the consumer and her partner were supported to actively engage with the hospital's complaint response process. The consumer and her partner gained clarity on the hospital's clinical classification of the incident and were supported to question it—drawing on both clinical guidelines and the severity of the harm experienced.

The consumer's experience and her family's concerns were formally documented and acknowledged by the health service. Service changes were recommended to improve service provision as a result of the complaint.

This case highlights the vital role of consumer advocacy in helping individuals and families navigate complex complaint processes, seek accountability, and drive systems improvement following traumatic health care experiences.

## 04. How we support and strengthen consumer voices within health

### Creating opportunities to shape our system

Creating opportunities for people to shape the health system through consumer and lived experience is our reason for being. As part of our 2024–2027 Strategic Plan, we've continued to prioritise connection, support, and leadership development for consumer representatives across Western Australia.

#### **Nurturing emerging consumer representatives – continuing to widen the circle of involvement**

This year we refreshed our Introduction to Consumer Representative Training, now offered both in-person and online. We also added after hours sessions to better support the needs of busy consumers. This flexible approach ensures more people can begin their journey as consumer representatives, regardless of location or schedule. This year 57 people across the state took part in these workshops.

#### **Keeping experienced consumer representatives connected**

As well as welcoming new community members as trained consumer representatives, we ran a number of workshops to support people to connect – with each other, with HCCWA, and with the big issues in health. This year we ran 8 training sessions with **290 registrations**.

We have also continued to provide professional development to the consumer representative network through offering free access for consumer reps to our Acknowledging Country and Seeing Beyond your Cultural Lens workshops. These workshops are helping their role within the health system. These workshops are also available on a fee-for-service basis to the community.

#### **Championing consumer leadership**

In response to the growing interest in including consumers in leadership settings, such as Health Service Boards and Executive Committees, this year we launched the HCC System Leaders Circle, a space for consumer representatives with experience in leadership settings such as boards and national committees. This group meets regularly and has had two members author a paper on a Consumer



A series of fact sheets has been developed in collaboration with our advocacy team subject matter experts, our consumer engagement team, and WA health consumers.



Training and Education Pipeline that we have shared with WA Health to inform future planning.

### Building self-advocacy confidence and capacity – stronger voices, better care

Thanks to the additional funds from WA Health this year we scoped, developed and piloted a new self-advocacy workshop, Stronger Voices, Better Care - Advocating for yourself and others in healthcare. This workshop now sits in our Stronger Voices, Better Care suite of self-advocacy workshop and resources which includes Empowering Health Consumers with Disability, and a new range of information fact sheets which are available on our website. This training was co-designed with a consumer advisory group who met several times over the development of the

workshop. We thank the group for their time, knowledge and expertise.

### Supporting systemic advocacy skills

In partnership with WACOSS, we delivered a hybrid workshop for consumers interested in systemic advocacy—helping them understand how to raise systemic issues that matter to them and their communities. A diverse group of 25 people attended:

- 5 Aboriginal consumers
- 4 consumers from culturally diverse backgrounds
- 6 who identify as experiencing financial hardship
- 8 who identify as living with or caring for someone with a disability or chronic condition

Participant feedback was overwhelmingly positive:

- “Restored my faith in humanity”
- “Valuable and very worthwhile”
- “This was an absolutely fantastic workshop, I really enjoyed the breakout session particularly as it felt we came up with some great stuff using the template, I hope you can run the workshop regularly and use info from the breakout sessions to make Action Items!”

### Sharing and learning together

Our team attended key conferences to spread promote HCCWA’s work, and to stay connected and informed, including:

- Carers WA Conference
- PwDWA Conference
- WACOSS Conference

the importance of consumer voices to people who work in organisations, as well as reaching out to consumers, carers and community members who attend these events.



**Joanne Khan**  
Lived Experience  
Nyoongar Advocate

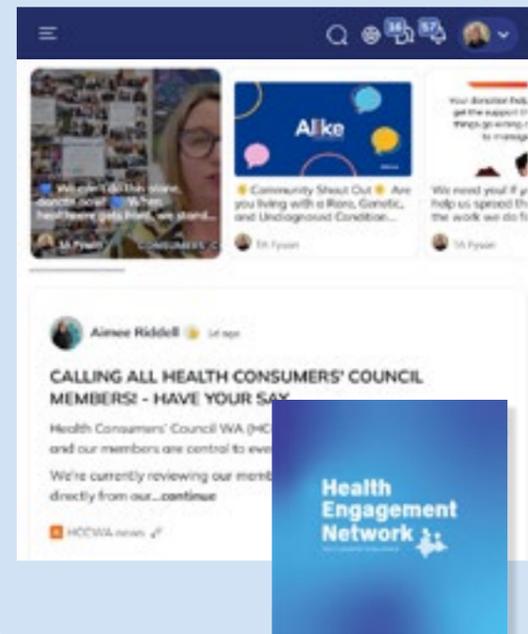
“My name is Joanne Khan I am a Proud Indigenous Lived Experience Nyoongar Advocate from Western Australia. I have been involved with Health Consumers Council WA for about the last few years and it has been a productive connection for me to engage with as I had the opportunity to walk in a small portion of the Matriarch in my family, my mother Gloria Khan’s footsteps to address the Health inequity for Indigenous First Nations Australians.

During my engagement with Health Consumers Council WA, I had the opportunity to

learn how to advocate through workshops and webinars and other forms of information.

Being a part of Health Consumers Council WA allowed me to learn about different Community Advisory Communities that needed Indigenous participation.

I would just like to say THANKYOU to Health Consumers Council WA and all the wonderful People that work within Health Consumers Council WA to Advocate for a Better Health System in WA.”



### Health Engagement Network

[healthengagement.org.au](http://healthengagement.org.au)

We’ve stepped up our use of this private online space to build community and connect with our members and stakeholders. Membership to the Health Engagement Network is free and open to anyone interested in shaping health system change to benefit all Western Australians.

At 30 June, we had 568 members, an increase of 17.6% on last year.



Social media tiles informing consumer about health rights for voluntary mental health patients



# How we amplify and champion diverse voices Aboriginal engagement & advocacy: listening, learning, and acting together

We continue to seek out the voices, learn from the strengths, and amplify the challenges experienced by Aboriginal consumers and communities to shape a health system that is culturally safe, respectful, and responsive.

This year, we welcomed Aaliyah as our Aboriginal Engagement Officer, supporting our Aboriginal Engagement Lead and Engagement Manager Tania. Together, the team deepened relationships and strengthened our presence at community events, including two Arche Health gatherings focused on Aboriginal health.

## Collaborating with community and advocating for change

We contributed to a range of initiatives and advisory groups, ensuring Aboriginal perspectives were embedded in decision-making:

- National Disability Advocacy Framework – advocating for culturally safe disability support
- Child Safeguarding Consumer Advisory Group (Child and Adolescent Health Service)
- Volunteering WA Inclusion Panel
- Aboriginal Community Advisory Group (CAHS)

- Eating Disorders Research Study Advisory Meeting (Edith Cowan University (ECU))
- Paediatric Escalation Project – improving safety for children in hospital
- Healthy Lifestyle Program
- Aboriginal Metro Networking Alliance
- Aboriginal Health Council of WA CEO Network Presentation
- Statewide Aboriginal Mental Health Network
- Sorry Day & Reconciliation Week Panels (CAHS & Womens and Newborns Health Service (WNHS))

Clare Mullen, Mary Baird CEO Ord Valley Aboriginal Health Service



## Creating space for Aboriginal voices

We hosted several workshops and focus groups to ensure Aboriginal consumer perspectives were heard and respected:

- Data Linkage Workshop – Department of Health
- Cultural Advisory Group – Healthy Lifestyles Project
- Aboriginal Community Workshop – Electronic Medical Record
- Voluntary Assisted Dying Focus Group
- Cervical Screening Focus Group – The Behaviour change Collaborative
- HCCWA Aboriginal Reference Group

We continue to nurture strong relationships with Aboriginal Health Liaison Officers, Project Officers, and teams across the health system.

## Honouring and building on our history: Aboriginal advocacy program review

We began a review of our Aboriginal Advocacy Program, which ran from 2006 to 2016. With the support of Matthew, a McCusker student from UWA and valuable insights from former program manager Laura, we've mapped out key milestones and outcomes. The final report will be shared in next year's Annual Report, preserving the legacy and impact of this vital work and contributing to the pool of knowledge in this area for the future.

## Working in partnership with the Aboriginal Community Controlled sector

Part of that history is recognising that HCCWA's Aboriginal Advocacy Program stemmed from a request from the Aboriginal Health Council of WA to support Aboriginal people with advocacy in relation to their experience with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services. We very much appreciate the positive and close working relationship that HCCWA and AHCWA continue to this day.



L-R Jane and Bronwyn of the Australian Family Partnership Program Kununurra, Tania Harris



Members of the Aboriginal Cultural Advisory Group for the CAHS/Curtin Healthy Lifestyles Project, coordinated by Tania Harris, HCCWA, with project team members.



# How we amplify and champion diverse voices – cultural diversity: building inclusive health conversations

For many years, HCCWA has invested in developing and maintaining strong and trusted relationships and partnerships with people and groups across WA's rich and diverse multicultural community. The blend of insights from people from a wide range of cultural backgrounds, with HCCWA's strong and deep relationships across health is a powerful force for change.

These strong foundations enabled us to sustain a strong amount of engagement and focus on this important area, despite the unexpected and sudden absence of our Cultural Diversity Engagement Lead Nadeen, only a few months into this year. In Nadeen's absence we welcomed Qistina into the team as Cultural Diversity Engagement Officer, who continued to build community relationships and support the portfolio. We would also like to thank Louise Ford – who set up HCCWA's cultural diversity program many years ago – for stepping in to deliver some training on behalf of the team. We have continued to build on our consumer networks with community and have also added a number of young culturally diverse people to our networks.

## Key projects and partnerships

### CaLD Cancer Project

In partnership with Cancer Council WA (CCWA), we recruited and supported a group of consumers from a range of cultural backgrounds to develop cancer information resources for culturally and linguistically diverse patients and families. These resources were translated into 7 languages. We thank the dedicated members of the consumer reference group Nadeen, Kieran, and our partners at HCCWA and the WA Department of Health, Health Networks for their investment in this important project.



### What the Doctor Said

CaLD community consultation for a project looking at people's information needs as they are discharged from hospital

### Joondalup Health Campus

We delivered a supporting cultural diversity in healthcare workshop

### Social Inclusion Mirrabooka and Surrounds Network

Ongoing participation in the Social Inclusion Mirrabooka and Surrounds Network hosted by North Metropolitan Health Service

### Electronic Medical Record (EMR) Culturally Diverse Community Conversations

Ensuring diverse perspectives inform the development of the EMR

### Other notable partnerships:

- Southeast Metro Multicultural Network
- Southeast Interagency Network
- East Metro Multicultural Network
- Swan Multicultural Leadership Forum
- Northern Suburbs Multicultural Network Forum

### Community engagement highlights – going to where people are

This year we connected with hundreds of diverse community members through events and presentations across Perth. These events gave us the opportunity to talk to people about their health rights, what

a consumer representative is and how to get involved, and about how to access our individual advocacy service.

Our attendance at all the metro universities O-days allowed us to engage directly with young people from culturally and linguistically diverse background and led us to present to students at UWA to talk about what we do at HCCWA and why the perspectives of young people is so important in shaping health and healthcare.

- Curtin, Murdoch, ECU, and UWA O-Days
- Altone Comes Alive Multicultural Festival
- Carer Participation in Health Network presentation
- UWA Multicultural Student Presentation
- Multicultural Wellness Day (Langford)

Do you need to speak to someone about a problem with a doctor or health service?

We provide support to people from all cultures and languages. Call us and speak with someone about how we can help. Tell us if you want a FREE interpreter.

Health Consumers' Council WA are here to help!

Keep this card on you or share it with anyone who might need it.

Visit [www.hccwa.org.au](http://www.hccwa.org.au) | Call 922 1342

Do you need help?

Wanna yarn or make a complaint about a visit to the doctor, healthcare service or hospital?

**Our mob at HCCWA are here to help!**

Give us a call to yarn on 9221 3422 or go to our website [hccwa.org.au](http://hccwa.org.au)

\*Keep this card on you or give it to mob who might need it\*

Your Health rights matter!

You have the RIGHT to:

- » get the health care you need
- » get safe care in a safe place
- » receive respect for your cultural identity and beliefs
- » be included in decisions
- » get information in a way you understand
- » a FREE interpreter
- » have your body AND information kept private
- » give feedback and make complaints about your treatment

Keep this card with you at appointments, call us if you need help

Healthcare rights matter!

I have the healthcare right in Western Australia to:

- » **Access:** to get the healthcare that I need
- » **Safety:** to get care that is safe and in a place that makes me feel safe.
- » **Respect:** for me, my family, culture, identity, and beliefs.
- » **Partnership:** for health services to work with me to make sure I receive the right healthcare for me.
- » **Information:** have my health information and results, get my information in a way I understand, ask questions, and bring a family member or support person with me to help understand.
- » **Privacy:** of my body, my information, and stories. They should be respected and kept secure and confidential.
- » **Give Feedback:** to make complaints and share my experiences

Keep this card with you at appointments and call HCCWA if you need help

Pictured: Qistina Taufiq and Clare at the Multicultural Awards



Front

Back

# 05. How we support health organisations to partner with consumers

## Creating the conditions for consumer influence

An important part of consumers driving positive outcomes is ensuring that health organisations are ready to partner with consumers. This is why HCCWA works closely with health services to help them embed genuine, inclusive, and impactful consumer engagement into their systems and services and ensure consumer

engagement is genuine and meaningful for consumers. Our support includes sourcing consumer representatives who reflect diverse demographics and lived experiences, facilitating engagement activities, and delivering tailored training to health staff.

### Training and capacity building – supporting WA Health to partner with consumers

In line with our core WA Health contract, we delivered six formal training workshops to health service staff this year. These sessions focused on:

- Partnering and Engaging with Consumers
- Aboriginal Patient Advocacy Training
- Supporting Cultural Diversity in Healthcare

#### Feedback for Supporting Cultural Diversity in Healthcare

- The resources were excellent – thank you.
- Very thoughtfully selected content. Great quality
- I think it was great
- It has made me to be more culturally sensitive in my role, to effectively support the patients both in the hospital and in the community

#### Feedback for Intro to Partnering and Engaging with Consumers

Q: What will you do differently after this workshop?

- One: share the information I gained from attending today’s workshop with co-workers. Two: contact Health Consumers’ Council for further suggestions/ideas to increase consumer involvement, particularly around increasing diverse consumer involvement Three: implement the suggestions I gained today by speaking with consumers directly
- Reframing existing work to use the engagement spectrum (was a very helpful visual).
- Understand the differences between actual partnerships and seeking feedback!!!

#### Feedback for Aboriginal Patient Advocacy Training

Q: What will you do differently after this workshop?

- Share with team at work and other health staff! Encourage staff to take part in the training.
- I will persist I will initiate I will ask more questions
- Be more involved with patients and speak to consumers about their experiences to help make a difference in my role.

These workshops are safe places for staff to deepen their knowledge of how to work respectfully and effectively with consumers, to appreciate the importance of involving a diverse range of perspectives, and to build their confidence in doing so. In this way we are working to ensure that engagement is not just a tick-box exercise, but a meaningful partnership.

We also provided tailored support to health services, including:

- Advising NMHS on the development of their Consumer Representative Training for their Consumer Advisory Council (CAC)
- Supporting Health Service Providers (HSPs) with consumer recruitment, consumer representative payments, and engaging with specific consumer groups
- Delivering training to Child Development Service allied health professionals on engaging with culturally and linguistically diverse families

#### Connecting health services with engaged and capable consumer representatives

We continue to promote consumer opportunities through our wide-reaching networks, helping health organisations connect with people who bring valuable lived experience to the table. Our networks are diverse, active, and growing – ensuring that consumer voices reflect the communities they serve.



Some of the new Consumer members of Clinical Senate L-R: Suzie May, Debra Letica, Dr Alison Parr Chair Clinical Senate, Clare Mullen, Sharon Taylor



L-R Trish Tran and Wendy Cream, Lived Experience Assistant Commissioners Mental Health Commission, Tania Harris, Clare Mullen

We maintain strong relationships with Chairs of Consumer Advisory Councils and the District Health Advisory Councils (regional consumer groups) and continue to actively build connections with other consumer groups across the health system.

#### Strengthening partnerships across WA public health services and the broader sector

We’ve met with and remain in regular contact with all the consumer engagement teams across WA Health, offering support, advice, and collaboration. These relationships are vital to ensuring that consumer engagement is consistent, coordinated, and impactful across the state.

We look forward to continuing to strengthen these partnerships in the years ahead, working together to build a health system that listens, learns, and improves through the voices of its consumers.

Next year we will be deepening our relationships with these teams in other parts of the health sector, such as private hospitals and community health services.

# 06. How we ensure consumers drive positive health outcomes – at a systemic level

## Creating the conditions for systemic change

Since 1994, when consumer leaders seized the opportunity to set up an independent organisation to provide a voice and recognised presence for health consumers in WA, Health Consumers' Council has worked relentlessly to champion consumer perspectives with decision makers in health.

This work involves gathering consumer insights and using these to write submissions, engage with Ministers and politicians, and promote consumer interests on system-wide committees and forums.

As we were developing our current strategic plan, our members and stakeholders celebrated past achievements which mean that consumers are now present in many rooms and forums where they hadn't been previously.

### From "being present" to "being partners"

And... we heard loud and clear that we must increase our focus to ensure consumer perspectives are heard, listened to, and that they drive positive change – both within health services, and at a whole of system level.

This required some changes in how we are structured and organised and we've made a start on that this year.

### Increasing our capacity for systemic advocacy

This year marked a significant milestone: in January 2025 we welcomed a dedicated Systemic Advocacy and Engagement Lead – Bronwyn – to our team, working 4 days a week. This role has allowed us to step up how we amplify consumer voices and take stronger action on the system-wide issues that affect people's health and wellbeing across Western Australia.

### Listening to and amplifying consumer and community concerns

We shared consumer input through written submissions to key consultations that help to shape the future of healthcare including

- WA Country Health Service Cancer Strategy



Clare Mullen speaking to the media on Budget Day 2025

- Guardianship Act Review
- Primary Health Networks Business Model
- Department of Justice Health and Wellbeing Service clinical policies
- Department of Health's Goals of Patient Care forms
- Productivity Commission inquiry into delivering quality care
- Dawson AHPRA Complexity Review
- State Public Health Plan

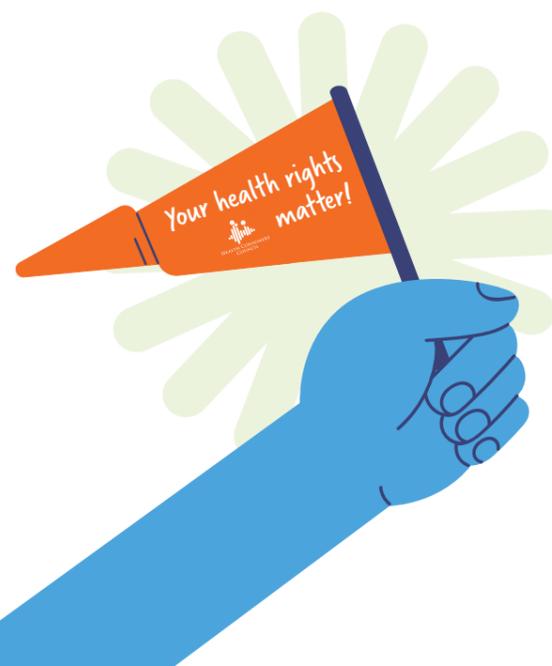
Each submission was informed by real stories and lived experiences, helping decision-makers understand the



human impact behind policy.

### Increasing the profile of health consumer perspectives by leveraging technology

This year we took a conscious decision to increase our presence on social media to share commentary on major health events and policies from a consumer perspective. From World Immunisation Week to the release of the Grattan Institute's report on specialist fees, we helped people in WA understand how changes in the health system affect them and provided a consumer lens in the public debate on these topics. We also unpacked the federal and



HCCWA's Executive Director with Minister Meredith Hammat, Minister for Health and Mental Health



state budgets, bulk billing incentives, and reflected why we need to talk about racial discrimination on Harmony Day.

### Let's make healthcare fair! Driving projects that matter

We launched several systemic advocacy projects aimed at making healthcare fair:

#### Hospital parking costs

We partnered with other advocacy groups, not for profits and consumer representatives to highlight the financial burden and health harm of hospital parking, sharing powerful stories of people and families forced to take out payday loans just to take their children to hospital or access emergency treatment.

#### Dental care access and quality

In response to consumer complaints and media issues, we worked with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra), the Australian Dental Board, and the Australian Dental Association to address concerning practices such as upfront payments, aggressive marketing, promoting the use of superannuation to pay for costly treatment and in some circumstances either not completing the work, not commencing the work or not performing work to an adequate standard.

#### Access to individual advocacy

We're advocating for every patient in hospital across WA to have fast, free access to independent advocates ensuring that people who have experienced a poor clinical outcome have free access to an advocate to assist them with the investigation process.

#### Consumer interests heard across health

HCCWA staff represent consumer interests on over 55 influential committees and working groups, ensuring consumer voices are put forward at the highest levels of decision making:



- WA Blood Borne Virus and STI Advisory Committee
- State Oral Health Advisory Council
- Department of Justice Health and Wellbeing Subcommittee
- WA Health Surveillance System Reference Group
- WA Health Goals of Patient Care Group
- Emergency Access Reform Program Project Control Group
- Long Stay Patient Project Control Group
- WA Health Workforce Strategy Project Control Group
- Collaborative Commissioning Partnership Committee Implementation Oversight Committee
- Ambulance Innovation Working Group
- Sustainable Health Review Recommendation 4 Steering Committee



L-R: Bronwyn Ife, Nurbek Jenayalev, Tania Harris, Sam Arbon, Pierre Yang, Harry Brooking, Joe Staniszewski, Clare Mullen

### Sustainable Health Review

With a new Director General of Health, and a new Ministerial Health team, we were delighted to hear the refreshed commitment to the Sustainable Health Review as it reached its five-year point.

In a continued commitment to consumer partnership and leadership, the appointment of the Executive Director of HCCWA to the role of Co-Lead for Recommendation 4: "commit to new approaches to support citizen and community partnership in the design, delivery and evaluation of sustainable health and social care services and reported outcomes" continued throughout this year. HCCWA are members of the SHR Partnership Group, and the SHR Program Board.

In addition to Recommendation 4, HCCWA has been championing consumer interests across a number of the recommendations including:

- 2a: Halt the rise in obesity
- 3c: Reduce inequity in health outcomes and access to care for people living in low socio-economic conditions

- 10: Partnership between WA Primary Health Alliance and the Department of Health to facilitate joint planning, priority setting and commissioning of integrated care
- 11: improve timely access to outpatient services
- 13: implement models of care in the community for groups of people with complex conditions
- 22: digitisation of the WA health system to empower citizens
- 25 and 26: develop contemporary workforce roles and building workforce capability

In many cases, HCCWA's role is to bring together groups of people with specific interests and experiences to be involved as partners in this work. While much of the work on the SHR is not yet visible to the general public, HCCWA takes heart from the knowledge that the commitment to the objectives remains in place.

- driving action on consumer partnership across WA Health
- Clinical Senate Executive Committee
- Federal Department of Health, Disability and Ageing WA Aged Care Collaborative

### Collaborating for collective impact

With additional resources we have also been able to participate in more collaborations on systemic issues with our partners:

- Systemic Health Advocacy Collective – a forum focusing on systemic advocacy in relation to mental health with Aboriginal Health Council of WA, Consumers of Mental Health WA, Alcohol and Other Drug Consumer and Community Coalition, Carers WA, Peer Based Harm Reduction and the WA Association of Mental Health
- Consumers Health Forum National Policy Group
- Fair Food WA Network

### Coalition for Preventative Health Funding

In November 2024, HCCWA joined with other health consumer groups across the country to call on the Federal Government to invest more in Australia’s health and help more of us stay as healthy as possible for as long as possible. The Coalition’s goal is to ensure consumer and community interests are at the forefront of discussions about preventative health investment.



## Case study

### A \$200 charge to bring a support person?

- » Support for private clinic complaints
- » Healthcare rights guidance
- » Driving clinic system improvement
- » Listening to, making sense of, and amplifying, consumer voices, especially when they feared ‘repercussions’ if identified

A consumer contacted the Health Consumers’ Council WA with concerns after being informed by a receptionist at a fertility clinic that there would be an extra \$200 charge to bring a support person to her upcoming appointment. The consumer felt this was unfair and sought clarification on whether this practice was normal or acceptable.

The consumer reported that when asked if she was bringing a support person to the appointment, it would cost \$200 extra to bring someone, and she felt this was egregious.

The consumer feared they could face negative repercussions in their care if they raised the issue as a complaint, and turned to our Individual Advocacy service for help, we:

- Guided the consumer through the Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights, specifically the right to ‘Partnership’ and include the people that I want in planning and decision-making.” Reassured the consumer and deescalated their concerned state.

- Our Advocate committed to contacting the clinic on the consumer’s behalf without disclosing their identity.
- Our Advocate reached out to the clinic’s Administration Manager, and found that another consumer had been refunded their \$200 fee to bring a support person on a different occasion.
- Our advocate clarified the clinic’s policy on behalf of the consumer, and found that the policy was incorrectly conveyed to the consumer and the clinic issues a fee if the support person is also a patient. She acknowledged that a new receptionist had provided incorrect information.
- The clinic administration manager expressed their intention to treat the incident as a learning opportunity and committed to educating staff and speaking directly with the receptionist involved to prevent future misinformation.
- Our Advocate communicated the outcome to the consumer confirming that there was no charge, unless that person is also a patient, and that the clinic acknowledged their information error and was taking steps improve their processes.

This case highlights the vital role of consumer advocacy in helping individuals understand their healthcare rights, have someone to turn to when they are worried about potential repercussions, drive clinic improvement following a miscommunication and ensure the the voice and concerns of WA health consumers are heard and amplified.

L-R Mark Fallows Manager Consumer Engagement WA Health, Clare Mullen, Tania Harris, Kerrie Mocevic



# 07. The road ahead

## Equitable, person-centred, quality health care and improved outcomes for all

There is a huge amount of reform underway in health and human services. While many people in Australia live in good health and have great healthcare experiences, too many groups experience enduring poor health outcomes, and experience harm in healthcare.

Consequently our focus includes ensuring HCCWA has the necessary capacity to ensure consumer perspectives are strongly represented at every level of decision making and across every health topic. And that we are able to keep pace with the evolving needs of Western Australia's growing and diverse population and the increasingly complex health system.

### With more capacity we could

- **Widen the circle** of people in the WA community who are involved in sharing their perspectives on health and healthcare – deepening our reach into the community and across the state
- **Support more people** in the WA community with independent individual health advocacy to assert their health rights and have their voice heard
- Seek out and **amplify the voices and perspectives of diverse consumers and community members** to champion more investment in preventative health and community-based health options

In 2025–2026, we expect to be actively involved in renegotiating our core contract with WA Health – which was last done in 2014. A lot has changed in our operating environment since we last reviewed the value of our core contract in 2014 and we hope this will be reflected in our discussions with WA Health:

- the WA population has grown by 18%
- the WA Health budget has grown by 60%
- Award rates of pay for HCCWA staff have increased by over 62% (due to Equal Remuneration Pay orders)
- The growth of social media, complex IT systems and heightened privacy requirements have reshaped how organisations connect and safeguard information
- there has been a welcome jump in requests to HCCWA for support in finding and supporting consumer and community representatives
- the growth and power of commercial interests in health have grown leading to further fragmentation of health services.



### Strategic initiatives

- Grow and diversify funding to amplify consumer impact
- Stand alongside more health consumers through independent advocacy
- Build and support consumer leadership
- Amplify our collective voice
- Expand consumer influence through a strong peak body presence
- Digital transformation across HCCWA
- Invest in our staff – the frontline of consumer advocacy and partnership

### Our commitment moving forward

The year ahead represents a pivotal moment for healthcare in Western Australia. We will measure our success not just in numbers but in relationships built, barriers removed, voices amplified and systems transformed. We aim to ensure consumer voices drive a healthcare system that truly serves every Western Australian, one where equity isn't an aspiration but a reality, where consumer voices drive innovation and where quality care is accessible to all.

To meet the need for more, and more diverse, consumer input, representation and leadership at every level of decision making across health and social care, we will continue our efforts to grow and diversify our income; upgrade our infrastructure, harness technology and invest in our people.

L-R: Tania, Chrissy, Caz, Kieran, Gloria Jacob Port Hedland DHAC Chair and CHF Board member, Sally, Kim, Jenni, Aimee, Emma



# 08. Our partners, funders and supporters

## Thank you for your ongoing support of our vision

We gratefully acknowledge the WA Department of Health for their ongoing commitment to supporting an independent community voice in all aspects of health policy, planning, and decision-making. Their support enables us to ensure that consumer perspectives are not only heard but actively shape the future of healthcare in Western Australia.

We also thank the WA Mental Health Commission for their valued contribution to our individual advocacy service, which supports people accessing voluntary mental health services to access advocacy support. Their partnership helps us provide timely, compassionate, and effective support to individuals navigating complex care systems.

Working in partnership is essential to achieving positive health outcomes. We are proud to collaborate with a wide range of organisations who share our vision for a fairer, more person-centred health system. These are just some of the key organisations we've worked with this year:

Claire Chapman-Diaz, Kylie Ekin and Liana Maumill from the Women's and Newborns Hospital Project with Tania and Clare from HCCWA



We welcomed Michele Kosky to the office to chat all things consumer advocacy



### Australian Commission on Safety & Quality in Health Care

- Medical Imaging
- NSQHS Standards Project
- ACSQHC GP Accreditation

### The Behavior Change Collaborative – Aboriginal Women's Health Screening

### National Health and Medical Research Council

- Roundtable consultations on the draft Statement on Consumer and Community Involvement in Health and Medical Research – with The Kids Research Institute

### What the Dr Said

### Fee for service – training and workshops

- Advocare (Acknowledging Country Workshops)
- Ramsay Healthcare – Cultural Sensitivity Training Workshop
- Child and Adolescent Health Service
- Curtin University – Presentation to 3rd Year Medical Students on Patient Advocacy
- Helping Minds (Acknowledging Country Workshops)
- Volunteering WA (Acknowledging Country Workshops)
- NMHS New Women's and Baby Hospital (Acknowledging Country Workshops)

### Core funding

- Department of Health
- Mental Health Commission

### Funded Grants – Projects

### WA Health – including the Department of Health and Health Service Providers

#### Department of Health

- Electronic Medical Record Program
- Cancer resources for culturally and linguistically diverse people – consultation
- Information and System Performance – Data Linkages
- Communicable Disease Control Directorate – Sexual Health and Blood Borne Viruses
- SHR Recommendation 4 Co-Lead
- Consumer Leadership project – part of WA Safety and Quality Health Service Strategy
- Emergency Access Reform
- Outpatient Reform Program
- National Primary Acute Care Data Linkages Project
- Expanding the use of Care Opinion
- The WELL Collaborative
- Genetic Services WA Project

#### East Metropolitan Health Service

- Healthy Lifestyles project (collaboration with CAHS)
- Rainbow Tick

#### Child and Adolescent Health Service

- Healthy Lifestyles Project (collaboration with EMHS)

#### South Metro Health Service

- Voluntary Assisted Dying consultation

### Cancer Council WA

Bronwyn Ife, Clare Mullen and John Carey Minister for Health Infrastructure



# 09. Our highly invested team

## HCCWA Board

Mallika Macleod	Chair (to Dec 24)
Melanie Gates	Chair (from Dec 24)
Niall Naghten	Deputy Chair (to Dec 24) then Secretary (from Dec 24)
Rebecca Carbone	Secretary (to Dec 24)
Ricki Smith	Deputy Chair (from Jan 25)
Ian Ludlow	Treasurer
Michael Crowley	Member (to Dec 24)
Meredith Waters	Member
Kim Brewster	Member
Kirtida Shah	Member
Al Muhit	Member
Sara Miller Dyer	Member
Tay Alers	Member



L-R: Sara Miller-Dyer, Al Muhit, Kirtida Shah, Dr Shirley Bowen DG WA Health, Melanie Gates, Mallika Macleod, Clare Mullen, Tay Alers



L-R: Aimee & Jane Pearce during a Q&A at 'Cuppa with a Changemaker'



Kieran at the WACOSS Conference

## HCCWA Staff

The majority of HCCWA's paid staff work part-time. We have approximately 15 FTE across permanent, fixed-term, and casual roles. Everyone here played a part this year in HCCWA's story.

### Leadership Team

Clare Mullen	Executive Director
Bronwyn Ife	Systemic Advocacy Engagement Lead (from Jan 25)
Kim Moore	Office and Executive Support Manager (from Aug 24)
Rebecca Smith	Head of Strategic Projects (to October 24)
Sally Harrison	Development Manager (from Jan 25)
Sam Arbon	Advocacy Manager
Tania Harris	Engagement and Advocacy Manager, Aboriginal and Disability Engagement Lead

### Engagement Team

Aaliyah Nestoridis	Aboriginal Engagement Officer (Sept 24 – March 25)
Aimee Riddell	Engagement and Advocacy Coordinator
Kieran Bindahneem	Engagement Coordinator
Nadeen Laljee-Curren	Cultural Diversity Engagement Lead
Pip Brennan	Senior Consumer Consultant, Electronic Medical Record
Qistina Taufiq	Cultural Diversity Engagement Officer (from Nov 24)

### Individual Advocacy Team

Bronte	Senior Advocate
Caz	Advocacy Support Officer (from Jun 25)
Chrissy	Senior Advocate
Helen	Senior Information and Advocacy Officer
Idil	Advocate (Aug 24- Feb 25)
Jen	Information and Advocacy Officer
Jenni	Senior Information and Advocacy Officer
Jessie	Advocate (from May 25)
Joe	Senior Advocate (from Feb 25)
Joff	Advocacy Program Officer (Jan – Mar 25)
Kerrie	Senior Advocate

### Corporate, Communications and Development Team

Emma Grant	Project and Program Support Officer (from Mar 25)
Michelle Mandoreba	Project and Program Support Officer (July 24-Jan 25)
Rachel Seeley	Marketing & Communications Lead (to Sept 25)
Tania Boylen	WELL Collaborative Digital Engagement Coordinator
Terri Anne (TA) Fyson	Marketing & Communications Coordinator (from Sept 24)

# 10. Treasurer's report

## Strategic priority: diversifying income

This year is the first where the Board opted to invest in our key strategic priority of diversifying our income. The recruitment of a dedicated Development Manager will help HCCWA prepare to be a partner of choice to philanthropic institutions and other government funders beyond our enduring relationships with WA Health and the Mental Health Commission.

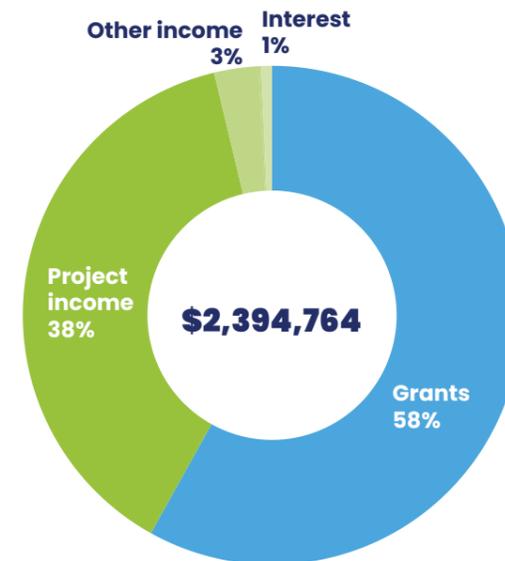
Another focus for this role has been developing clear information about how we can support organisations in the health and social care sector with their goals of partnering with consumers and users. This will continue to be a focus into the coming years.

The very welcome additional fixed-term investment in HCCWA by the WA Department of Health and the Mental Health Commission meant a 33% increase in revenue in 2025 compared with 2024.

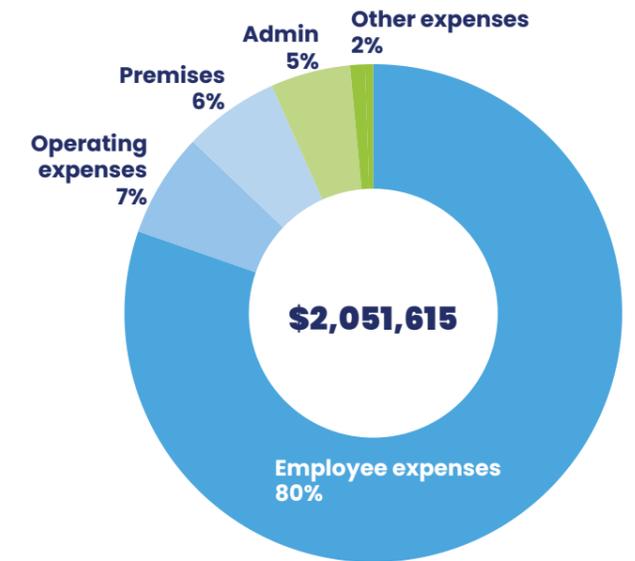
Receiving funds in advance in a lump sum has given us the opportunity to invest some of these funds into Term Deposit accounts until needed which will provide modest, but welcome, returns to HCCWA and are a small step to helping us build up our untied income. A possibly surprising outcome of receiving funds in advance is the Australia Accounting

Standards require this cash in advance to be shown as income in the year received, which has resulted this year with a surplus of \$343,000. Approximately \$342,000 of this surplus is cash received in 2025 which will be spent in the 2026 year due to the timing of funds and our ability to recruit team members into new positions to deliver the contracted services. Without this adjustment to meet Australian Accounting Standards, the Management Committee consider the more realistic effective result for the year as close to the planned for break-even position. More detailed information of this adjustment is shown in Note 9 to the Financial Statements.

A major focus for the team this year has been the preparation of a sizeable grant application to Lotterywest to support digital transformation at HCCWA. If successful, the new Customer



Income to June 2025



Expenses to June 2025

Relationship Management (CRM) system and new website will help us move to being a data driven organisation while offering a streamlined experience for people who wish to connect with us. Having a more effective CRM in place will enable the HCCWA to operate more efficiently and provide support to more people in need.

Through the Finance, Audit and Risk Management Committee, the Board have discussed the strategic risks of HCCWA's fluid and political operating environment, as well as the strategic and practical risks associated with cybersecurity.

Thank you to the HCCWA team, who are well supported in this work by our business services partner Businav providing accounting support

Ian Ludlow  
Treasurer



## Health Consumers' Council WA

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