

POSITION STATEMENT

HCA Consumer Advocates, Nominees and Representatives

Introduction

Health Consumers Alliance of SA Inc (HCA) is the peak body for health consumers and health consumer organisations in South Australia. HCA defines health consumers as “people who use, or are potential users, of health services including their family and carers”. Since 2002, HCA has supported a network of consumers, carers and experienced advocates, nominees and representatives. This is central to our vision:

‘Consumers at the centre of health in South Australia’.

Background

Advocates, nominees and representatives are consumers who are individual members of HCA, or are consumer members of organisations which have HCA membership. These roles provide opportunities for members to utilise their skills, knowledge and passion to provide an effective and legitimate consumer perspective. HCA’s objective is to promote and facilitate the voices of health consumers within decision making.

HCA has a consumer advocates, nominees and representatives policy which provides the definitions associated with consumer advocates, nominees and representatives; the principles guiding their roles; the concepts underpinning their roles; and details on their recruitment, training, mentoring and performance management. The policy also details eligibility, delegated authority, and reporting requirements. Overall this policy provides the structure for encouraging and organising the participation of consumers, and the expression of their interests, in health care decision making.

HCA position

HCA considers defining the scope of consumer advocates, nominees and representatives’ roles, and providing clarity about HCA’s commitments to and expectations of those working in these roles, supports sustainable consumer engagement in health care decision making. HCA also believes the clarity about commitment and expectation will support associated organisations in their engagement of health consumers.

Purpose of the Position

Overall this is designed to support good practice and achieve HCA's goal of effective and legitimate consumer engagement and participation.

In the first instance, the scope of HCA consumer advocates, nominees and representatives is determined by the four strategic directions of HCA:

- We lead health consumer engagement across all levels: individual, service and system.
- We lead systemic advocacy and policy to shape consumer centred care.
- We provide information, learning and development to build the skills of consumers and health services.
- We develop our people, culture and systems to be an effective and thriving organisation.

This provides a way of deciding which roles require consumer advocates, nominees and representatives. Emerging and future roles will be identified as part of HCA's partnering and planning processes.

HCA's expectations of and commitment to consumer advocates, nominees and representatives

HCA has developed three key roles for consumer, member and staff participation in health decision making. These are:

- **HCA Consumer Advocate**

This role represents and advocates for consumer interests based on a consumer's lived experience, wider consumer networks, and service or policy knowledge. This is a voluntary role and HCA recruits, trains, and mentors consumer advocates to participate within external committees. HCA requests consumer advocates report on their activity and provides support when the activity complements HCA strategic directions.

- **HCA Nominee**

This role is formally endorsed by HCA to sit on an external committee or be recommended for Ministerial Appointment on a Government Committee. HCA nominees sit on committees in their own right. Through our nomination process we request that nominees keep HCA informed of major issues arising through their work.

- **HCA Representative**

This role represents consumer interests on behalf of the HCA organisation. This person is usually a Staff or Board Member and is authorised through the Chief Executive to participate in an external committee. HCA members with a significant history of collaboration with HCA may also be appointed as an HCA representative.

Procedures describing the processes for eligibility, delegated authority, selection, appointment, reporting requirements and support are in the policy document. It provides guidance for how HCA considers requests for consumer representatives from external committees, and defines expectations on working relationships between HCA, consumer members and agency representatives.

HCA consumer advocates, nominees and representatives selection criteria

HCA has the expectation these roles will be filled by health consumers who have:

- knowledge of the health care system, and commitment to consumer centred care and current understanding of reform developments
- an understanding of HCA policy and program principles
- connections to broader consumer and community networks, wider than their own personal experience
- good communication skills.

HCA's expectations of and commitment to associated organisations

HCA values consumer and community participation in the health system, and seeks to constructively support consumer advocacy and representation as a vital element in health policy development, service planning, implementation and evaluation. When working with health consumer advocates, nominees and representatives, HCA invites organisations to consider both the unique perspective and needs of a consumer advocate. In particular, HCA asks organisations and committee chairs to:

- provide an orientation or induction process for consumers to the work and role of the organisation or committee
- recognise the contribution of consumers through the provision of sitting fees and reimbursement of associated costs including travel, child care and carer respite

- regularly invite comment from consumer advocates throughout meetings and other processes
- provide an environment that promotes equity, social justice, human rights, workplace health and safety, diversity and non-discrimination.

References

SA Health, 2013. A Framework for Active Partnership with Consumers and the Community, Government of South Australia.

SA Health, 2013. A guide for Engaging with Aboriginal People, Government of South Australia.

SA Health, 2013. A Guide for Engaging with Consumers and the Community, Government of South Australia.

For more information

www.hcasa.asn.au

www.safetyandquality.gov.au

www.sahealth.sa.gov.au

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