



## Care Opinion Australia – HCASA Registered Watcher

Care Opinion (formally Patient Opinion) is an independent site where anyone can share their stories about their experience of care. The site covers health and aged care, and community services in Australia, giving service users, their families and carers the opportunity to publish their personal experiences, good or bad, of the care system. Care Opinion Australia was launched in 2012. Care Opinion is a not-for profit charity. It operates on a subscription basis for Local Health Networks/ Districts and other health and community service providers to establish open dialogue for feedback between consumers and the services. In Western Australia Care Opinion has been adopted as the platform for WA Health services consumer feedback.

In mid 2019 HCASA met with Michael Grekko, the Founding Director of Care Opinion Australia, to explore how Care Opinion and HCASA could work together in South Australia. HCASA also discussed the option of SA Health actively supporting and utilising Care Opinion to increase its reach and avenues for community feedback across the state.

Although SA Health made a clear decision not to subscribe to Care Opinion, it left it up to the Local Health Networks to decide how they would or would not engage with feedback about them from consumers using Care Opinion.

Members of the public anonymously post a story (positive or negative) on the website about their experience with a local care service. Moderators review all posts to ensure they are not defamatory for any member of staff

- Care service staff can then be alerted when a story is posted about the service, ward, facility or department that they are interested in.
- The organisation can then publish a response to the story on the website.
- The consumer or carer is then alerted to the organisation's response and the constructive dialogue continues.
- Where appropriate, the care service provider can demonstrate whether a change has been made as a result of the story posted on the site.
- People visiting the website are able to search and review all consumer/carer stories about care services. Responses from relevant care organisations are also public. Visitors to the Care Opinion website are able to see the number of people in the care organisation listening to consumer stories.

HCASA became the 'registered watcher' of Care Opinion, which in effect, actively notified HCASA of all consumer feedback and complaints made about health and community services in South Australia. In South Australia, HCASA has monitored this feedback and proactively informed all services of feedback and/or complaints received about them through Care Opinions as a means to promote timely dialogue and early intervention and action by health and community services to address any issues and also to acknowledge positive feedback.

In the main, HCASA's process of advising organisations when a post has been made about them, has been well received by service providers who have actively thanked HCASA for providing this bridge. It has meant that service providers are able to make a decision about what action to take, early. As much of the feedback is complimentary, it also provides service providers with some positive feedback to share with relevant staff and use as a shared learning opportunity.

Care Opinion is increasingly being recognised and utilised by health, community and aged care services, as a legitimate platform for consumers to provide feedback and for service providers to actively and transparently engage with consumers in relation to their feedback. It ultimately supports quality improvement processes. In WA Care Opinion is the government required consumer feedback and complaints mechanism used by all WA Health services.