

## **West Vic Division Consumer Health Network**

West Vic Division covers a large geographical area and it was a challenge for our Division to find a way to consult with the community across this region. After looking at the consumer work other Division were doing, we decided to set up a Consumer Health Network based on the model being used by Southern Tasmanian Division of General Practice.

### **How we sourced consumers**

Two types of the consumers were approached to join our Network:

- Type 1 were members of the rural communities in our region who had an interest in health issues;
- Type 2 were members of health special interest groups.

Type 1 members were sourced through Division staff who had already had some involvement with these members of the community who seemed interested in health issues and/or were willing to go on committees or boards or have input into Division projects.

Type 2 special interest groups contact details were found in local council directories.

### **How we invited consumers to join**

Once we had names and addresses, we wrote to the contacts including:

- Letter of invitation
- Membership form
- Consumer Health Network flier.

If we received a completed membership form, we wrote again to the person with:

- Welcome letter
- Information kit.

### **How we use the Consumer Health Network**

We currently have 48 members on our Consumer Health Network. Members are kept advised of Division activities through bi-monthly bulletins. From time to time they are invited to take part in focus groups or to complete surveys or join projects the Division are running. The network provides us with useful links into the small rural communities within our Division region.

From time to time we have consumers on our project teams, these consumers are paid for their time and travel to attend. They are also funded to attend relevant consumer training. Consumers participating in our focus groups are also paid for taking part.