

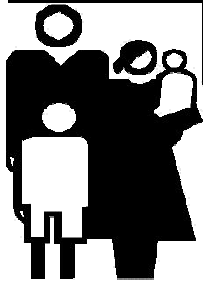
**Nepean Division of General Practice
Consumer Reference Group**



Terms of Reference and information

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What is a Consumer Reference Group?

A Consumer Reference Group consists of people who come together to provide advice to an organisation, from a consumer perspective. Consumers are also represented on some Program Advisory Groups.

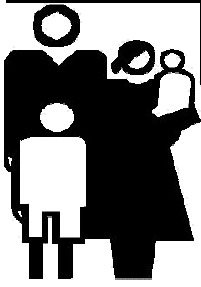
Why does the Nepean Division of General Practice have Consumer Representatives?

The Consumer Reference Group and Program Advisory Groups allows advice from a consumer perspective. This advice contributes towards the decision making process of the Nepean Division of General Practice and the activities it undertakes. The Consumer Representative provides:

- An avenue for communication between GPs and consumers/consumer organisations.
- A broad perspective of consumers opinions and experiences with primary health care
- An opportunity for consumers to provide feedback to general practice in a formal and confidential manner as a means for ensuring continuous quality improvement.
- An efficient mechanism for gathering consumer's suggestions on health and social issues relevant to the Divisions role and specific programs of the Division
- Community awareness and support for the Division
- Links with marginalised sectors of the community, to ensure that their services best meet the needs of the local population.

Activities where the consumer could have input would be:

- Strategic program development
- Identification of gaps in services
- Strategic planning/priority setting
- Feedback about programs and services run by the Division
- Comment on changes facing General Practice that will impact consumers
- Policy issues on which the Division may wish to lobby
- Evaluation



Nepean Division of General Practice
Consumer Reference Group



What is my role as a consumer representative?

The role of a consumer representative is to provide a consumer perspective. This often differs from a bureaucratic, service provider, industry, academic or professional perspective. The role of a consumer representative involves:

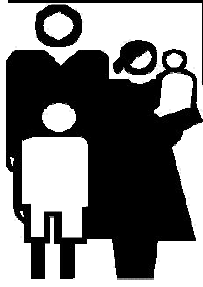
- ◆ protecting the interests of consumers
- ◆ presenting how consumers may feel and think about certain issues
- ◆ contributing the consumer experience
- ◆ ensuring the group and Division recognises consumer concerns
- ◆ reporting the activities of the group to consumers
- ◆ acting as a watchdog on issues affecting consumers
- ◆ providing information about any relevant issues affecting consumers.

Representation

Consumers will be represented on the Consumer Reference Group as a sub-committee of the Board. In addition, consumer representation is available on the following Program Advisory Committees:

- ◆ Youth
- ◆ Mental Health
- ◆ Chronic Disease
- ◆ Home Medication Review/National Prescribing Service Program
- ◆ Immunisation

Information acknowledged and adapted with permission from the Greater Bunbury Division of General Practice "role of the consumer representative".



**Nepean Division of General Practice
Consumer Reference Group**



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Consumer Reference Group

Aim:

To develop an alliance between the Nepean Division of General Practice and consumers in the Nepean area, from a strategic perspective, that contributes to the provision of high quality general practice services.

Functions:

1. To provide information and advice from a consumer perspective to enhance the role and work of the Nepean Division of General Practice
2. To discuss and comment on the needs of communities in the Nepean area and issues related to general practice
3. To comment on programs that are being developed or that are established within the Division
4. To participate in relevant aspects of the strategic planning of the Nepean Division of General Practice
5. Suggest and support further opportunities for consumer involvement in programs and activities of the Nepean Division of General Practice.

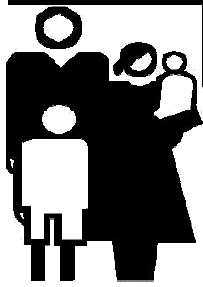
Program Advisory Group - Consumers

Aim:

To develop an alliance between the Nepean Division of General Practice and consumers in the Nepean area, from an operational level, in a specific area of health promotion and activity.

Functions:

1. To provide information and advice from a consumer perspective to enhance the role and work of the Nepean Division of General Practice
2. To discuss and comment on the needs of consumers within a specific health related program
3. To contribute to the effective operation of a Division program through the avenue of the Program Advisory Group.

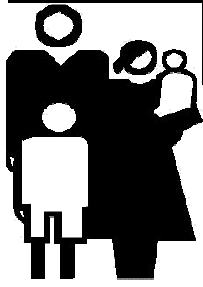


Guidelines for Operation of the Consumer Reference Group:

1. The Consumer Reference Group is a sub committee of the Board of the Nepean Division of General Practice.
2. The Secretary of the Board of the Nepean Division of General Practice chairs each meeting of the Consumer Reference Group. The Nepean Division of General Practice CEO and a staff member will also attend each meeting. In the absence of the Secretary then the CEO will chair the meeting.
3. The Board of the Nepean Division of General Practice will refer relevant matters related to health policy to the Consumer Reference Group for comment and advice
4. Development of programs may be referred to the Consumer Reference Group seeking their comment and ideas for consumer involvement in the programs
5. The Board of the Nepean Division of General Practice may refer relevant strategic program ideas and program proposals to the Consumer Reference Group for comment and advice
6. As a matter of protocol the Executive Committee of the Nepean Division of General Practice will consider pertinent information, ideas and comments from the Consumer Reference Group, and discuss these at their Board meetings. Otherwise, feedback will be provided directly to the relevant Program Officer
7. The Board of the Nepean Division of General Practice will seek and consider input from the Consumer Reference Group in the strategic planning process
8. All efforts are to be made to share any relevant Divisional information (written or verbal) with the Consumer Reference Group
9. Issues taken to the Board by the Consumer Reference Group need to be substantiated with appropriate background information
10. There is to be no release of information to the media by the Consumer Reference Group unless previously approved by the CEO

Guidelines for Operation of the Program Advisory Groups:

Consumers on Program Advisory Groups will, along with other members, contribute to the meeting agenda items in a similar manner to those consumers on the Consumer Reference Group. The difference will be that of contributing at an operational level where the functional objectives are the responsibility of the CEO and Program Officer.



Nepean Division of General Practice Consumer Reference Group



Membership:

The Consumer Reference Group will consist of five to seven consumer representatives. Membership will also include at least one local GP who is a member of the Division Board, the CEO and a Division Program Officer.

The Program Advisory Group will be made up of representatives from GPs, Divisional staff, relevant other professionals and consumers. Membership numbers will vary, dependent on the program.

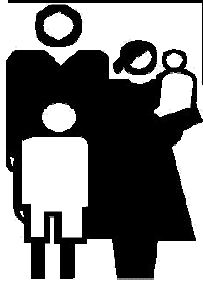
When seeking to recruit new members, the Division will consider the diversity within the community to be reflected in the make-up of this group, ie. age, gender, ethnicity, etc.

Committee membership will be for a period of one year. Membership can be renewed annually up to a maximum of 5 years. Consumers may become members of another Program Advisory Group or the Consumer Reference Group.

Regular non-attendance at meetings - with or without an apology - will be reviewed by the Division and Consumer Reference Group. The member in question will then be contacted by the Division to discuss time commitment and priorities, which may result in the forfeiture of their membership.

Membership Criteria:

- Consumer of local health services and / or live in the Nepean Division region
- Able to commit 1.5 hour per quarter to attend meetings, as well as travel and pre-meeting reading time
- Have a broad understanding of health issues
- Should not be paid workers from the health service
- Able to listen to the views of others and operate effectively in a group setting
- Will exercise discretion and maintain confidentiality with respect to sensitive issues that may arise during the course of duty as consumer representative. If in doubt about the sensitiveness of any issues contact the CEO.



**Nepean Division of General Practice
Consumer Reference Group**



Orientation, training and on-going support:

The Division provides orientation using this Information Kit. In addition follow up discussion between the Division Program Officer and nominated Consumer Representative will occur. Further informal training and support will be provided as required by the Division.

Procedures:

- Meeting dates and times will be negotiated at the end of each Consumer Reference Group or Program Advisory Group meeting.
- Meetings will run for approximately one and a half hours
- The frequency of meetings will be approximately once every three months.
- The Consumer Reference Group and Program Advisory Group will meet in the offices of the Nepean Division of General Practice - 10 Macquarie Avenue, Lemongrove (accessible by car, bus and train – Penrith Station).
- Consumer representatives will be paid \$25 per hour
- An Attendance List will be presented at each meeting to be signed by those present. This will be used to draw the payment cheque
- Consumer Reference Group meetings will be chaired by the GP Board member and Program Advisory Group meetings by the CEO
- Minutes will be taken by the Division's Program Officer
- Nepean Division of General Practice will provide administrative backup (photocopying, faxing, mailing, etc) for Consumer Reference Group and Program Advisory Group activities

Information acknowledged and adapted with permission from the Whitehorse Division of General Practice Consumer Advisory Group Terms of Reference.