



Top End Division of General Practice

A Brief History of the Consumer Reference Group

In the late 1990's the Top End Division of General Practice undertook research that indicated a strong need for improved links between GPs and community organisations in the Top End. The Division developed this as a key objective in the 1996-7 Strategic Plan.

Increase communication and understanding between Top End GPs and their local communities.

Strategy 1 *Increase the recognition and understanding of the GP's role in the health care system within the Top End community*

Strategy 2 *Develop mechanisms for consultation with consumer organizations and consumers about issues of relevance to general practice*

The Consumer Reference Group was established as one of the means to achieving this objective.

The CRG's function today is to provide consumer input into Division Programs, and in doing so contribute to Program development, implementation and evaluation. The CRG has monthly meetings that also serve as a forum to discuss specific issues of relevance to consumers in the Top End. The Group also may undertake specific projects from time to time.

The Division's strategic plan states that *'Quality of patient care is improved through strengthened relationships between general practice and consumers'*.

CRG's achievements and involvement:

- TEDGP Board of Directors - two consumer position on the Board
- Representation on invitation to Royal Darwin Hospital's committees eg Out Patients Department Project, Quality Seminars
- Consultation on invitation e.g. GP Registrar training, NT After Hours Project
- Representation as required on TEDGP Working groups eg Mental Health, Birth Forum, Immunisation
- Involvement in Recruitment – e.g. interview for CEO positions
- Development & Production of Community Announcements for Radio *'Getting the Most out of your GP Visit'*. The announcements have been produced in six different languages and have been broadcast Territory-wide

Provision of consumer feedback on:

- Health Complaints The NT Commission's *'Draft Code of Health & Community Rights & Responsibilities'*
- The *'Consumer Participation Toolkit'* developed by the Department of Public Health Flinders University
- Consumer Health Forum discussions of issues regarding E-Health
- Interpreter Services for GPs - lobbied for the establishment of an Aboriginal interpreter service in the NT.

Conference Attendance:

- Australian Divisions of General Practice Conference
- Australasian Quality in Health Care Conference in Darwin, June 2000
- Consumer Health Forum – Consumer Training workshops and other consumer consultations e.g. Electronic Health Record workshop

Memberships:

- Member of the Consumers Health Forum – currently hold position on National Governing Committee
- Individual CRG Members are supported in membership of Health Consumers of Rural and Remote Australia