



Australian Divisions of **General Practice** Ltd

ADGP Board Consumer Representative - Russell McGowan

Russell has been a consumer observer at the ADGP Board since August 2003, having succeeded Sheryl Rainbird from Tasmania who was the first consumer to fulfill that role. He is currently vice chair of the Consumers' Health Forum of Australia, and was nominated to this position by that body. Russell grew up in Adelaide and rural SA, and studied at the University of Adelaide in the late sixties and early seventies, eventually emerging with an arts degree majoring in psychology and politics.

He delivered Aboriginal employment and education programs in NSW during the 1970's before undertaking a graduate diploma in Aboriginal education and teaching a group of Aboriginal school leavers for a while at Coober Pedy in SA. An opportunity then came up in Melbourne to help develop a national employment policy for Aboriginal people. This position was transferred to Canberra in the mid 1980's and Russell has mostly lived, worked and studied in that city ever since. He completed coursework for a Masters in Public Administration in 1991.

Russell's interest in health issues only emerged in the early 1990's when he was diagnosed with myelofibrosis, and underwent an allogeneic bone marrow transplant which has ostensibly cured the original disease at the cost of setting up a series of chronic symptoms attributable to a condition known as graft versus host disease. These ongoing concerns and his experiences during treatment have led him to become an active healthcare consumer. He has participated in many support and advocacy processes over the past decade, and has represented consumer viewpoints on many health planning and service delivery committees, both at the ACT level and nationally. He continues to chair a number of health consumer groups, as well as representing consumers on a number of national boards, including the Cancer Council of Australia, the National Blood Authority and the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards.

Russell's experience with Divisions of General Practice stretches back several years, as organizations he has led have collaborated on projects including provision of enhanced primary care, colorectal screening pilots, after hours service provision and chronic disease self management. He is a passionate believer in collaborative effort between clinicians and consumers to achieve optimal primary healthcare outcomes for the community, and believes that there are many consumers out there willing and able to work with Divisions to achieve this. What he hopes to bring to the Board is an ability to share learnings from successful consumer collaborations with GPs and other clinicians, and a focus for consumer and community representatives associated with the Divisions network to assist them to raise issues and ideas about how to achieve better outcomes through general practice. This will require building on existing networks of consumer organizations and representatives, and spreading the word about successful initiatives and methods to Divisions who are not yet engaging effectively with their communities.

Numerous tools to assist Divisions already exist through the agency of such bodies as CHF and the National Resource Centre for Consumer Participation in Health on such websites as www.chf.org.au and www.participateinhealth.org.au. Through his role with the ADGP Board, Russell will be pleased to act as an interpreter of these tools and assist in their application to specific circumstances encountered by various Divisions.