

# Engaging effectively with communities project

## A joint project of the AGPN-SBO Coalition

### Background and context

Community engagement is vital in comprehensive primary health care. While representation is one approach, divisions also use other effective strategies to connect with their local consumers and community. If we are to achieve a greater focus on wellness within our community, consumers of health care need to know that general practice services are designed to empower them to take an active role in their care, and not be merely recipients of care.

The ADGP-SBO Coalition, through negotiations with the Department of Health and Ageing, has provided funding via the 2006 Performance and Development funding pool to enable the implementation of a Divisional Network training program for engaging with their local communities. This will be completed via internationally acknowledged professional development training and skills enhancement developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) <http://www.iap2.org/> will form the basis of training and research materials that will be adapted for the needs of Divisional personnel.

There is evidence which identifies the linkage with better health care and effective community engagement. The ADGP-SBO Coalition has identified that skill development in this key area would be a core capacity builder for the divisions network, and thus the rationale for this project. In addition, this

approach will assist the Network with mechanisms, skills and tools for not only working with their communities, but provide improved and enhanced divisional responsiveness to their members needs.

### Program aim

*To assist the Divisional Network in building and sustaining the community engagement skills within divisions to be able to engage effectively with key stakeholders and more specifically, their local communities.*

The aim of the project is to assist Divisions to have a better understanding of who their 'community' is and how to work with them more productively – with an increased range of skills and strategies to engage with people and to plan services more efficiently.

### The project:

The project build's upon existing resources in the Network, and consists of an education and training program, which has been piloted to ensure its relevance to the Divisions Network. Pilot workshops were held in Queensland and Victoria (end of 2006, beginning of 2007), facilitated by the SBO's.

The workshops consist of a one day training program, with support for Divisional staff to attend (assistance with travel). Workshops are currently being held in each state and territory across the Divisions network.

**Who should attend the workshops:**

Divisions Network Board members, CEOs and Divisional employees are the target group for this education and training.

**Workshop outcomes**

On completion, program participants who fully participate in all aspects of this workshop will be able to:

- identify the need for and the purpose of community engagement
- understand the terms of community consultation, community engagement, community engagement and involvement.
- establish the issue, problem or scope of a decision requiring community engagement
- select the most appropriate level of engagement using the IAP2 Spectrum
- see how participatory democracy (through meaningful community engagement) complements the role of election representatives.
- identify, analyse and profile key stakeholder groups
- plan a Community Engagement process
- understand the benefits and costs of a number of community engagement techniques
- prepare for and implement a number of community engagement techniques
- plan to evaluate a Community Engagement

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