

Getting Involved on Committees

Information for the **Consumer Partners** on committees

Information for Consumer Partners working on BHS committees.

This document is intended to give you a more in depth understanding of participating in committees at BHS, your role and responsibilities on the committee and what you should expect from other members of the committee.

Why do health organisations involve consumers?

- To enhance the quality, safety and effectiveness of the organisation
- To understand the community's diverse cultural and different needs
- To provide appropriate and responsive healthcare
- To meet accreditation requirements

Consumers bring a unique perspective to the organisation and can draw from their own experiences, their experience as a carer, family member or friend or from their participation within their local community. Who better to inform the service than those who use the service.

The role of a Consumer Partner is to:

- Present the consumer perspective (how consumers think and feel)
- Contribute consumer experiences
- Ensure consumer concerns are recognised and considered
- Provide feedback to the committee on issues that are affecting consumers
- Ensure accountability to consumers
- Report committee activities to other consumers' (if appropriate – check with the chair of the committee)

Consumer Partners who are involved on committees should expect the following:

- Given clear information about your role and purpose of the committee
- The offer of hard copies of long documents posted to you, to avoid printing costs at home
- Information (including member list) about the committee you will be attending

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- Preparation and any background information you may need to understand the context of issues to be discussed
- Introduction to all members at first meeting
- Clear support from the chair of the committee
- Explanation of unclear terms and health-related jargon
- The right to add items to the meeting agenda and ask questions during meetings
- Advance arrival of pre-meeting reading and agenda and sufficient notification of any changes
- Preparation or debriefing before and after meetings with the chair of the committee (if needed)
- You are treated with respect and are listened
- Entitled to disagree
- Able to give feedback to the chair or Consumer Partnership Officer about your experience on the committee

If you feel that you are not being treated properly or need more support, speak up as soon as possible so that the issue can be addressed quickly. You can either talk to the chair of the committee or contact the Consumer Partnership Officer on 5320 8571.

Some questions you might ask in a meeting:

- Is a new proposal safe and fair?
- Are the choices for consumers clear and well-defined?
- What (or whose evidence) is this based on?
- Does it meet all relevant consumers' needs
- Do we know the needs of all the affected consumers which includes marginalised groups?
- What are the implications of the new initiative/program or service?
- How will we measure that a change has been effective?

And remember:

- You don't have to know all the answers

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- Don't think you have to represent the whole community
- Give yourself time to settle into the committee
- Look after yourself and reach out if you need additional support.

References

This brochure has been adapted from a consumer document located on the Health Issues Centre website <https://hic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/HIC-Information-for-consumers-on-health-service-committees.pdf>