

"This training has given me the confidence to go back to my organisation and work with them to increase consumer representation."

Who is Health Consumers NSW?

Health Consumers NSW (HCNSW) is an independent organisation funded in part through the NSW Ministry of Health. It provides a state wide voice for health consumers to enable them to have a role in shaping health policy and service development.

HCNSW provides a training program for health consumers who are either engaged with a health system activity, or considering engaging in such an activity.

What is the Health Consumer Representative Training Program?

The training program runs for 2 days and introduces participants to the concepts and practises of consumer engagement in the NSW health system. The training sessions are best delivered over 2 consecutive weeks.

The program is facilitated by two experienced leaders, one with extensive experience with consumer engagement in the community and in health settings. Both leaders are highly experienced trainers in the not for profit sector. Both leaders bring their own significant experience in engaging with consumers, as well as their high level professional expertise.

All participants receive comprehensive workbooks for each day as well as a *Further Reading Manual* containing extensive information which supports the education material.

Who should attend the Health Consumer Representative Training Program?

This program is designed for health consumer representatives within the NSW health system. This could include consumer health representatives on committees and boards within Local Health Districts, Primary Health Networks or Public or Private Hospitals, and health NGOs. It is suitable for people who are relatively new to this role and also for more experienced health consumer representatives.

This training is *not* aimed at health consumers who are looking for ways to negotiate the health system and be individual advocates for themselves or others (such training may be offered in the future).

How will your consumer representatives benefit from attending this program?

Whether your consumers representatives are newly engaged or have been with your service for a long time they can still find themselves in need of extra support to effectively carry out their roles.

Even though you may offer your consumer representatives various ways to provide feedback, some can still feel like outsiders in comparison with the clinicians and managers with whom they are working. Without training or support consumers can be reluctant to raise issues or questions, so you may never know how they really feel.

The HCNSW training program gives participants the opportunity to learn from others in similar roles and to discuss various problem solving strategies. The aim is to empower consumers to recognise the immense value they bring to the health service.

Areas covered in the training program:

The HCNSW Consumer Representatives Training Program covers the following areas:

- understanding the roles of health consumers and health service providers and the interactions between these groups
- the context of the NSW health system and Primary Health Networks
- how consumer engagement in health services has evolved over time
- the role of HCNSW
- levels of consumer engagement
- understanding effective advocacy
- the significance of personal beliefs, values and networks
- communication skills, networking, negotiating and influencing
- tips and tools for effective participation in meetings.

Day 1 covers these specific topics:

- what it means to be a health consumer and a health consumer representative
- understanding the important contribution consumers make to the health service
- roles and interactions of different health professionals
- understanding how the NSW health system works across state and local areas
- the role of Primary Health Networks
- different levels of consumer engagement
- how to be an effective advocate
- how to analyse a health policy.

Day 2 covers these specific topics:

- values, beliefs and attitudes and how they shape our views
- skills and characteristics necessary for effective consumer engagement
- preparation for meetings, including understanding agendas, minutes and other meeting procedures
- tools and tips for being an effective consumer representative
- conflict resolution strategies.

Each day includes exercises, discussion and debate about contemporary health topics.

National Standards for Safety and Quality

Standard 2 of the National Standards for Safety and Quality in Healthcare provides a framework for active partnerships between consumers and health services.

The criteria includes:

- consumer partnership in service planning
- consumer partnership in designing care
- consumer partnership in service measurement and evaluation.

The HCNSW Consumer Training Program is designed to assist health services meet their obligations under Standard 2.

The training enables consumers to fulfil their partnership role and motivates them to play an active role in the health service.