

Health Consumers Queensland submission

Healthy Futures Commission Queensland Bill 2017

Queensland Parliament

Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention
Committee

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About Health Consumers Queensland

Health Consumers Queensland's mission is to support the voices of Queensland health consumers to achieve better health outcomes. We are a registered health promotion charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission and aim to strengthen the consumer perspective in health policy development and system reform and design.

Health Consumers Queensland defines consumers as people who use, or are potential users, of health services including their family and carers. Consumers may participate as individuals, groups, organisations of consumers, consumer representatives or communities.

Health Consumers Queensland believes consumers should be central to all decisions that impact on their health care options and advocates for consumer involvement in health policy, planning and service delivery at local, state and national levels.

Health Consumers Queensland fully supports the delivery of consumer-centred, integrated healthcare that fully promotes the consumer's active participation in their healthcare and broader health services and systems.

Health Consumers Queensland's Response

Health Consumers Queensland provided a submission to the *Inquiry into the establishment of a Queensland Healthy Futures Commission Queensland* in 2015.

We commended the Queensland Government for its decision to establish a Healthy Futures Commission Queensland.

Further, we welcome the opportunity to provide a consumer and community perspective on the *Healthy Futures Commission Queensland Bill 2017*.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1:

Health literacy is about how people understand information about health and health care, and how we apply that information to our lives, use it to make decisions and act on it (source: *Australian Commission on Safety & Quality in Health Care*). Health literacy is important, it translates to more efficient use of the health system, and reduces wastage within the health system.

The revised National Standards on Safety and Quality in Health Care (to be released in November 2017 and against which hospital and health services will be accredited from January 2019) will require hospitals and health services to demonstrate how they are increasing health literacy for consumers, carers and staff.

The Commission's initiatives must be focused on helping Queenslanders be better able to find, understand and apply health information, and therefore be more active in our own health outcomes. This will enable prevention and early intervention by supporting consumers to take greater responsibility for our health especially around obesity, physical activity, substance use and occupational violence.

Recommendation 2:

In order to maximise impact of the Commission upon improving health outcomes for Queenslanders, its work and that of the innovative projects it funds must be designed, delivery, evaluated and monitored using a collaborative, open, robust process with health consumers, carers and health consumer/carer organisations including condition specific organisations and Health Consumers Queensland.

This Bill must ensure that community partnerships and consumer and carer participation is meaningfully embedded in the organisation at all levels (including Board representation and a Consumer/Carer Advisory Council with diverse representation including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, regional and remote communities, other communities affected by socioeconomic disadvantage, LGBTI communities, mental health consumers and carers) from its inception.

Similar to the legislation governing Hospital and Health Services, **the Bill should require the timely development of a comprehensive Consumer and Community Engagement Strategy and Implementation Plan across all levels of the organisation and all activities, which the Commission is required to resource appropriately** eg. staff responsible for supporting engagement activities, training for staff and consumers, budget to remunerate/reimburse consumers for their time and out-of-pocket costs. This work should also be reflected in the Business Case that goes to Cabinet. Health Consumers Queensland would welcome the opportunity to support the development and implementation of the Business Case, Consumer and Community Engagement Strategy and Implementation Plan.

Recommendation 3:

Communities are the experts in their own health and wellbeing. The Commission's grants programme should provide a mechanism to link communities with organisations who can support them to develop their own innovative and effective responses to health issues that disproportionately impact on them.

As per the above recommendation, the Commission's **grant program must also require consumer and community participation be embedded at every stage.**

Consumers should be integrated into the grants process including the development of the funding guidelines and decision making process.

All applications should demonstrate how they have developed their proposals in partnership with the target populations.

If they are successful in securing funding, the Commission should require all applicants to report on how they partner with consumers/community in the design, delivery, implementation and evaluation of their funded initiative.

Recommendation 4:

As an independent statutory authority, the Queensland Healthy Futures Commission Queensland independence will be uniquely placed to utilise a whole-of government and systems approach to the development of activities which will address the social determinants of health. As such, the Queensland Healthy Futures Commission Queensland should be required to **establish Cross-Government Advisory Groups (including consumers and representatives from key stakeholder groups)** to inform key campaigns and mechanisms.

Recommendation 5:

We note that the Commission will be funded through a mix of base funding, re-allocation of existing time-limited health promotion programs and projects, and election commitment funding. **There needs to be clarity around the link between the Commission, the CHO's office and Queensland Health's Prevention Division**, in terms of focus areas, expertise, collaboration and avoiding duplication.

Recommendation 6:

We note the scope has been focused on children and families. Whilst we welcome the impact that this will have on reducing the future burden of disease on Queenslanders, we recommend that the Commission's **initiatives identify and report on how they impact on improving the wellbeing of other population groups** eg. older people. Further, we hope that with proven success, over time the Commission could extend its focus to other population ages and group.

Conclusion

Health Consumers Queensland welcomes the creation of a Queensland Healthy Futures Commission Queensland. We look forward to supporting the Commission to be a vital driver for empowering communities to improve our own health outcomes.