

What's the information you need right now?

What consumers are saying today

Health Consumers Queensland Consumer Coffee and Connect Session #1

Who attended: people from across Queensland - most live outside SEQ. Three were from FNQ and quite a few from western Qld. Attendees included young people, First Nations people and people living with a disability.

Today's coffee and chat started with the question "How are you doing?". Conversation quickly turned to deep concerns and distress about a lack of visibility of planning and what will happen. People with any vulnerabilities, including those with a disability, said they feel "abandoned".

Key issues:

Consumers online today were very worried. They feel like there is no plan.

People feel like we are in freefall and people are angry and frightened and feel abandoned. How are we at this point when we have been locked down for so long and we have had so long to put a plan, logistics and communications in place. Government has adopted a let it rip attitude and abandoned those who are vulnerable. Real sense of hopelessness: mask wearing not enforced, pointlessness of checking in, testing delays, lack of tailored booster information for immune-compromised, who is checking for new variants.

They are very worried that people are going to die unnecessarily because there is no plan.

"I have serious concerns of what is happening in the health system right now, especially for people who are currently getting treatment. ...As consumers we need to be talking very seriously to government. There is utter confusion. We do not have proper information, it's the "what the hell are we going to do" type approach.

Current consumer experiences shared today include being unable to get food or medications in rural and remote areas. *Others shared being unable to get non-COVID care in the home now eg for side effects with the booster. A cancer patient was unable to get ambulance to take them to the correct location for treatment and was returned home without having had treatment.*

Consumers want knowledge but underpinning this knowledge and information, they want reassurance that the government has got a plan particularly now so close to the peak.

In rural and remote areas, until the situation reaches the point where the disaster management response kicks in, people are at increasing risk of not being able to get food or medication and community members being unable to look after each other.

Consumers are ready to hear that it is going to be bad because they are already experiencing it in their own homes and across their communities. *What they don't want is to hear nothing. People will then be able to self-mobilise and make choices and plans which work for them.*

The information and messages consumers say they need right now:

- Nail down the plan, communicate the plan to the people in the system, communicate to everyone else.
- Recognition and acknowledgement that we are on a disaster footing. Keeping basic services going e.g. food, rubbish collection, water, electricity, health services.
- The point of a plan is to avoid preventable deaths.
- People need to know the escalation pathways, so they can cut through the noise across their own communications channels armed with the basic knowledge of what is available and what they can expect.
- People need to have a clear guide to symptoms and how to monitor whether they are mild, moderate or severe and an escalation process (when and who to).
- Suggestion: daily Fire rating visualisation based on capacity of regional/local healthcare services - being real and honest about where we are at.
- State-wide information is important but regional based information is crucial. Surge is going to come in regional areas at different times. Need local information about when it is hands on deck and knowing who is sick in their communities and how to help.
- Saving the community and support services and organisations for the people who really need them (and how they can do so). Comms advising that where you can, you are going to have to mobilise around your local streets and local families, here's how to food drop safely. Contactless etc.
- Go back to reminding people about the 80%, 15%, 3% rule
- Communications about booster system e.g. apparently the online booking system is not updated regularly so people should ring up rather than try to book online.

What are Health Consumers Queensland Coffee and Connect Sessions?

Different to HCQ's Consumer Conversations and Webcasts, this new format of HCQ's online consultation session is simply listening to consumers. No presentations or guest speakers. During these informal sessions consumers are able to:

- Share their experiences in a safe, respectful space with people who can relate to their experiences and circumstances
- Tell HCQ what it's like to navigate the health system at this time especially if they, a loved one or someone they care for has an existing or underlying health condition or is considered 'vulnerable'
- Flag up whether they are getting the care they need
- Share what they've heard through their networks and community groups
- Know that HCQ will be sharing key issues at a strategic level within Queensland Health
- Get support and a listening ear to everyone who joins in.

Next ***Health Consumers Queensland Coffee and Connect Session*** session will be held this **Thursday 20th January, 5.30-6.30pm**. Consumers can register via Zoom to attend [here](#).

Contact:

Melissa Fox

Chief Executive Officer

melissa.fox@hcq.org.au