

“Working together for the best care possible”

What health consumers and carers are saying this week

This week's **HCQ Issues Paper** brings together information from health consumers, consumer organisations and NGOs, and some professional organisations collected by HCQ via:

- **HCQ Coffee and Connect On-line Session #5:** 10 consumer attendees mostly from SEQ as well as Mareeba, Cairns and Charleville (Wed 2 Feb)
- [How you are going living with COVID - Tell HCQ what is happening](#) is an on-line engagement tool for consumers. Responses: 2 Barcaldine and Gold Coast.
- **HCQ Consumers, Community, & Clinicians COVID Forum** (3 meetings/week)

We were speaking with some Torres Strait Islander Elders over the last week. One of the Elders asked: **“Are we doing the best we can?”**. HCQ asks each of us to consider that question.

Are we working together with the right people, inside and outside our organisations/networks, to do the best we can?

Key Issues

Communications

What's working well

Website improvements are appreciated
HealthDirect information hitting the mark
Telehealth information and experience a plus

Consumer solutions for gaps in messaging

A need for tailored advice from hotlines, not blanket advice
Back to school information: inconsiderate, incomplete, inconsistent, inaccessible
Education-specific concerns from culturally and linguistically diverse communities

Care during COVID

Tests still hard to get
Role for visitors and consumer navigators to combat social isolation
Transport/discharge gaps for COVID+ people, rural & remote areas, culturally & linguistically diverse

Communications

What's working well

- Some consumers reported an improved change to QH website information; easier to find information, better presented, less confusing. Especially around the side effects from a vaccination/booster and clear advice about what to do if they are similar to COVID symptoms.
- Consumers very satisfied with on-line information from HealthDirect however consumers said this organisation and website is not yet well-known in QLD.
- Consumers are very happy with the communications and experience around telehealth – getting easy access to care and information that might be challenging to get otherwise.

A need for tailored advice from hotlines, not blanket advice

- A carer shared an experience of receiving 3 different types of advice from 2 different hotlines. It highlighted the need that staff try, as much as possible, to contextualise their advice for the person calling. *Some people may need help to eat and go to the toilet. If they are told that they can't have any of their support workers in their home (as they are considered a close contact), this is unreasonable advice.* Clear scripts/information pathways would help staff to quickly identify if a caller needs extra consideration/information for their specific needs. A case worker approach, where the person who takes these calls also has the extra responsibility to help the person navigate and advocate for the care they need would be helpful.

Back to school information: inconsiderate, incomplete, inconsistent, inaccessible

- Schools with outbreaks are still expecting school to resume on Monday without consideration or provision of alternatives for households which include people at greater risk of COVID.
- Schools seem to be doing their messaging themselves; this means there could be gaps in information and core, key messaging is not reaching a significant population in Queensland.

Education-specific concerns from culturally and linguistically diverse communities

- Some culturally and linguistically diverse communities are concerned about whose responsibility it is to pay for RATs and masks for their children to attend school; what will happen if they are called to school because their child is sick and they are in casual employment.
- Some of the bespoke vaccination clinics that supported vaccinations for culturally and linguistically diverse adults haven't been activated for children aged 5 to 11.
- Information about when you can stop isolating is not clear. When there are more than 4 people living in a house, this might extend isolation times for all members significantly.
- Although you can ask for an interpreter to translate communications materials, this option isn't offered in the communications from Education Queensland.

Care during COVID

COVID tests still hard to get

- On-going issues trying to access RATs even with a concession card, as no priority system is yet in place. Individual chemists are finding their own solutions to this, including keeping some under the desk for those people with concession cards.
- Testing clinic opening hours changing, but signage is poor and either – doesn't let people know of the change or has too much information you can miss key info including phone numbers.

Transport/discharge gaps – including for people who are COVID+, and/or live in rural and remote areas, who are culturally and linguistically diverse.

- Transport was an issue before COVID-19 and is now exacerbated by the pandemic.
- Different metropolitan hospitals have different options when COVID positive patients are discharged from their care. Consumers identified that a system to ensure people got home safely (and without infecting others) was important.
- This same issue is exacerbated and complicated if your home is not near the hospital where you were admitted; if you live with a disability; are culturally and linguistically diverse; and have no support networks back at home.

Role for visitors and consumer navigators to combat social isolation

- Consumers continue to raise almost every week, their desire to help each other. Can they visit people in aged care, hospital, who have no support network to provide companionship and connection? Could consumer navigators be used in hospitals to help those who need extra support and navigation of the hospital system?

For more information on this HCQ Issues Paper please contact:
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Our COVID Response

For all HCQ Issues Papers:

[COVID-19 | Health Consumers Queensland \(hcq.org.au\)](https://www.hcq.org.au)

What are Health Consumers Queensland's weekly 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.

- Share their experiences in a safe, respectful space with people who can relate to their experiences and circumstances.
- Consumers tell HCQ what it's like to navigate the health system at this time and flag up whether they are getting the care they need

What is the Health Consumers Queensland's Consumers, Community & Clinicians COVID Forum (C4F)?

A newly established forum for key stakeholders outside the public health system for rapid:

- **high level info sharing**, with an **equity lens** ie. gaps in the COVID response for vulnerable communities
- agreement on **burning issues** to collectively escalate
- identify **consumer-focused solutions** to resolve and the role our organisations can play to support
- **advocate for immediate resolution** by Government / system / other stakeholders

Attendees this week included COVID:19 consumer representatives, consumer and community organisations and health professional organisations.

One of the first outcomes of this group is an open letter to Commonwealth and State disability and health ministers seeking vital supplies, services and supports for people with a disability in the current Omicron environment. A growing list of organisations (eighteen) have added their voices to support. Read the letter and see media coverage [here](#).