

Shaping a proactive COVID response in Qld in 2020: PARTNERING WITH HEALTH CONSUMERS

INDEPENDENT EVALUATION KEY FINDINGS

An independent evaluation of the impact of consumer engagement during COVID-19 (Jan 2020 – January 2021) found the following:

“HCQ was assertive, advocating from the outset that consumer voices and representation was a strategic component in the pandemic response.”

- This action early in the pandemic leveraged trusted relationships with clinicians and Queensland Health leadership team, to ensure consumer voices and representation at strategic levels in the pandemic response. Examples include hosting on-line forum for First Nations peoples and people who live in rural and remote communities.
- Senior leadership in Queensland Health responded to the call for consumers to have a voice and invited HCQ representation on Queensland Health working groups and committees. HCQ provided a conduit for consumer voices into complex and sensitive operational settings by facilitating bespoke consultations and hosting on-line Consumer Conversations.

“HCQ identified population and service gaps and elevated relevant concerns and advice to a strategic level with Queensland Health.”

The strengthening of alliances with HCQ, Queensland Health and other NGO agencies directly relevant to the pandemic event, benefited the consumer groups they represent (e.g., aged care and advocacy, palliative care, disability).

- Consumer representation in Queensland Health working groups and committees resulted in the identification of population and service gaps in pandemic response initiatives such as COVID-19 testing, hospital visitation, and quarantine, and this supported Queensland Health to connect with relevant population groups to address their needs (e.g. international students, prisoners, Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACFs), First Nations peoples, culturally diverse communities, homeless people).

The flow of information from consumers to Queensland Health was recognised by the Chief Health Officer as being of value: *“Because HCQ found out what was worrying people, and what people wanted to know, it was fed to my team who then went looking for answers and gave me background to talk to. They facilitated the discussions, and they had a real skill set. They knew how to communicate with all the different stakeholders. It was quite critical.”*
Dr Jeannette Young, CHO

“HCQ partnered with Queensland Health to improve communications with the community and create information and resources to assist consumers to navigate health system changes.”

- HCQ moved rapidly to design and facilitate an online communications platform, conducting 23 Consumer Conversations that were fit for purpose during the pandemic restrictions with praise from the Chief Health Officer (CHO) for HCQ’s contribution to supporting Queensland Health and the community.
- HCQ supported Queensland Health to improve communications and messages to the community by providing access to diverse consumer networks, quick response reviews and bespoke consultation, and engagement with experienced and trained consumer representatives.
- HCQ partnered with clinicians, health staff and non-Government organisations to develop resources that built consumer confidence to navigate the health system during pandemic conditions telehealth, Compassionate Conversation Guides, RACF guide, Know Your Rights.

“HCQ extended the outreach and distribution of trusted and reliable pandemic information into regions and back to relevant central leadership areas of the Department”.

- Best practice in disaster management includes “intelligence” or “on the ground” information through engaging with local communities. HCQ’s significant efforts during the pandemic response resulted not only in bringing consumer voices to the attention of Queensland Health, but also the development of trusted channels of communication from consumers around kitchen tables in regions, and in online conversations.
- Participants in this evaluation spoke of the benefit of receiving trusted, timely and relevant information for them to pass on to their communities and networks.

“HCQ documented issues arising, and solutions proposed, for pandemic relevant topics and ensured the documents were circulated in targeted and open ways.”

- This approach provided insightful feedback through the unified voice of consumers and the Department of Health. The documentation of Issues Papers provided a consistent and accessible mechanism for all participants to distribute appropriate and relevant information across networks.

“I think this (engagement in the pandemic response) was a very clear example of how it (HCQ) is a valued organisation and how important its networks and established policies and procedures, and everything they have done in the past, could mobilise for this purpose. It highlighted their existing work.” (Consumer)

This evaluation also found:

- **High levels of satisfaction from consumers, HCQ and Queensland Health staff about the contribution of consumers and their engagement with Queensland Health during the pandemic during 2020.**
- **Provision of online consultation by HCQ throughout 2020 provided Queensland Health executive staff and clinicians opportunities for engagement and rapid pulse checks on critical issues.**
- **New partnerships were formed with other NGO advocacy peak agencies.**
- **An increase in the diversity of consumers and their direct engagement across the State.**

About the Project

Health Consumers Queensland was funded by Queensland Health's COVID-19 funding, to contract an independent evaluator to conduct a mixed method evaluation of the activities, approach and outcomes of consumer engagement during COVID-19 in 2020. An Evaluation Reference Group, (made up of a diverse group of health consumers, Queensland Health staff, and HCQ staff and a Board member) provided input to the design, conduct, and reporting of this evaluation. The program logic and final report were peer reviewed by Hopkins Centre, Griffith University.

The independent evaluation was led by Robyn Grigg, an independent evaluator with a background in evaluation of health and community services, as well as working in consumer and community engagement, disaster management.

How it was evaluated

A participatory and mixed method approach was used with 113 participants (consumer and carers, HCQ staff and Board, Queensland health staff, consumer advocacy peak agencies, and Health Consumers Collaborative of Queensland) including:

- Semi structured interviews
- Open form questionnaires
- A survey
- 2 focus groups
- 3 case studies of exemplary activities: Consumer Conversations, COVID-19 testing framework and ethical decision-making activity.

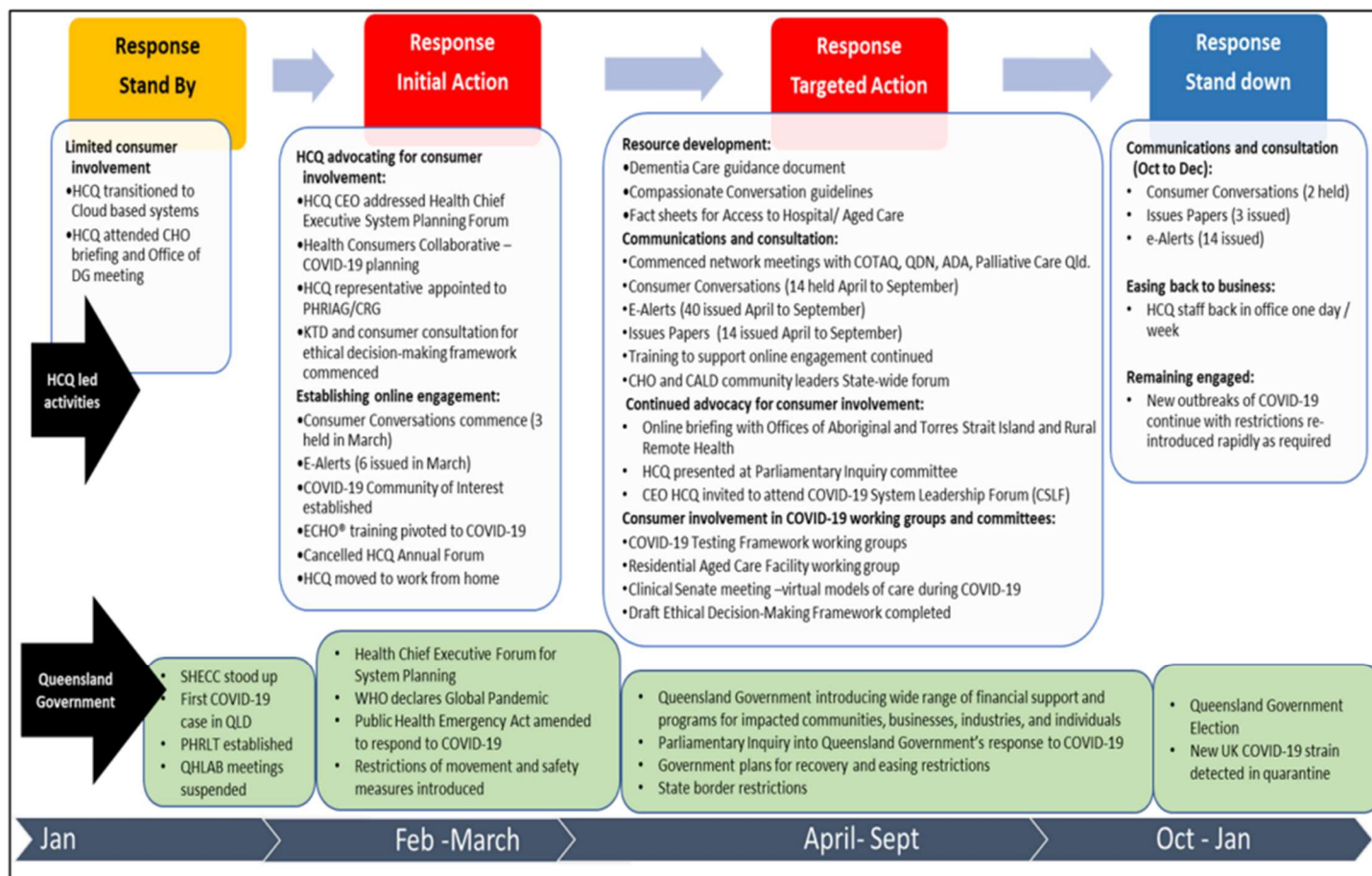
Executive Summary

The Executive Summary can be viewed at: www.hcq.org.au

Health Consumers Queensland

HCQ and consumer involvement during the pandemic in 2020

The following visual graphic demonstrates Health Consumers Queensland strategic role in seeking and facilitating opportunities for consumers and HCQ to shape the response:



(Figure 5 Consumer engagement during the pandemic in 2020) p11 of Executive Summary]