

UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES AND WAY OF WORKING TASMANIAN HEALTH CONSUMER ORGANISATION

Introduction

The Tasmanian Department of Health, Tasmanian Health Services and Primary Health Tasmania have provided funding to establish an independent statewide health consumer organisation (HCO) for Tasmania. This commitment to a HCO in Tasmania is based on the outcome of extensive consultations undertaken with consumers and stakeholders in 2016 and implementation has commenced with the recruitment of an Executive Officer to build the organisation.

Consumers and stakeholders consulted strongly supported an organisation that is high-level, strategic and focused on systems advocacy and equipping consumers and service providers to work in partnership. This recognised that consumers and community members are an essential part of producing a better health system and must be given a greater role in service planning and delivery. There is evidence that when consumers insights and perspectives are considered, better outcomes result.

This document highlights the key principles that will guide the establishment of the HCO and will be embedded in the processes and activities that will be undertaken as part of the establishment process.

The Underlying Ten Principles and Ways of Working for the Tasmanian Health Consumer Organisation (HCO)

Fit for Purpose Co-Designed Organisation

There is commitment to engaging consumers and relevant stakeholders in co-designing an organisation that will be appropriate for the Tasmanian health system and meet the needs of its constituents. From the outset, an Implementation Advisory Group will be established which will include both consumers and stakeholders to advise, assist and facilitate the establishment process. It is also envisaged that a workshop will be held with a broad group of consumers and stakeholders to workshop the model of the new organisation.

Statewide, value adding organisation specifically focused on the consumer perspective in health and which provides independent, well informed expertise and advice

One of the fundamental principles on which this HCO will be established is the acknowledgement of existing organisations and working with them rather than the establishment of a new entity that organisations have to work with. The HCO needs to be seen as value adding to the existing organisations and health services by taking on a statewide, coordinating role. Developing a statewide HCO that adds value, coordinates and facilitates consumer representation, consumer training and support and provides high level advice was regarded as a priority for Tasmania.

Ensure the independence of the consumer voice

One of the critical success factors to health consumer organisations is the level of independence of the consumer voice. Having an organisation that is enabled to provide an independent voice will be seen as credible if health services are to be improved and system change effected. A critical component of transforming the health system is empowering the consumer voice and enhancing capability. Creating an organisation that empowers consumers to provide that independent advice and voice conveys respect and valuing of their views and insights and begins to demonstrate the change in power relations between consumers and health service providers. It creates a climate for collaboration and shared decision making. Independence signifies trust which is the foundation for any effective working relationship.

Is strategic, systems focused and statewide

The key focus will be to build capability to influence change and shape the future health system. Therefore, priority needs to be given to systems advocacy, providing a state-wide view on consumer issues and ensuring a level of coordination across the system. There are already mechanisms for consumer advocacy, input and advice operating at local or organisational levels. What is currently missing in Tasmania is the overarching state-wide view across a range of consumer population groups, settings and conditions.

Is Led by Consumers in Tasmania

The consumer voice needs to drive the HCO's core business and consumers need to participate in all aspects of the organisation including governance. It will be important as a first step in the establishment of the HCO to develop and implement a consumer engagement strategy with a view to establishing a statewide consumer panel. This Panel needs to include a diverse range of consumers including vulnerable groups, young people, older people and culturally diverse consumers. Consumers will be remunerated for their time and a consumer remuneration policy will be developed to guide payment for relevant activities. One of the goals of the HCO is to be a leader in consumer engagement and develop and promote best practice in this area.

Working in Partnership

Fundamental to effective co-design will be working in partnership. Working in partnership with consumers, stakeholders and all components of the health system will be a key way of working. This principle acknowledges there are existing organisations in Tasmania that play a role in consumer advocacy and participation and need to be linked into the work of the HCO.

The HCO will not be able to achieve its goals without a partnership approach. Partnership will be important in coordinating policy, advice and response, engaging with specific population groups, developing a consumer engagement strategy and coordinating a consumer network. It will also be important not to duplicate the work of other organisations and develop a clear focus and priority for the HCO. It is being established to fill a gap, not to duplicate existing services. Partnerships will also assist in promoting consistency and best practice across organisations in consumer engagement and participation.

There is commitment to building and developing partnerships that will be sustainable and lead to improvements in the consumer experience of the health system in Tasmania.

Capability building of consumers and service providers to work in partnership to drive system change

One of the underlying principles of establishing an HCO in Tasmania is to build capacity of consumers to be system influencers and community enablers. This involves education, training, support and mentoring to develop skills and capability to work in partnership and enhance collaborative practice. This builds a network of consumer leaders that can partner with all components of the health system to drive change.

It will also be as important to build capability with the service providers to collaborate and work with consumers as it will be to support and enhance capability of consumers. It requires an attitudinal shift and a change in culture to develop the foundations of trust, respect and valuing of the respective positions for collaboration to occur.

Is contemporary underpinned by a strong evidence base and working in alignment with current health reform processes

Tasmanian HCO will build on and leverage the learnings and approaches adopted by CHF and the other state-based HCOs. It needs to utilise current technologies, take a multi-dimensional evidence-based approach to consumer engagement and develop expertise and a body of knowledge on consumer-centred care. The consumer voice needs to be embedded in an evidence-based approach to lead and influence change.

The health system is changing and the evidence base is increasing for a new and enhanced role for consumers to play. Contemporary approaches build consumer advocates to be leaders and to provide a strategic voice which is well informed, educated and underpinned by an evidence base. Consumers need to be the leaders in consumer-oriented care. Tasmania is well placed to take up this opportunity and build a new type of consumer advocate.

There is a strong and growing evidence base for consumer-centred care and a growing appetite from consumers to be engaged in meaningful collaboration with the health system where they can engage in shared decision making and shape the future.

Focused on delivery and sustainable solutions

A key focus of the HCO will be to identify and influence change that delivers a longterm sustainable improvement to the Tasmanian health system. The HCO recognises that meaningful change takes time, requires evidence to build a case for change and potential changes to the system can be complex and take time to implement.

The lived experience is valued and supported and treated with respect.

The HCO will provide a safe environment for consumers to advocate on behalf of and represent their respective communities and groups.

This includes being an organisation that respects and encourages open dialogue and ensures consumers will be supported in sharing their lived experience; that the settings and contexts where consumers are required to share their lived experience will be carefully explored and vetted to ensure a level of safety for the consumer; and provides clear expectations and support about consumer participation, briefings and debriefing.