



Consumers Health
Forum OF Australia

Rural and Remote Health Special Interest Group

General purpose and operation of the group

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*General purpose and operation of the Rural and
Remote Health Special Interest Group.* Canberra,
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Background

The Consumers Health Forum of Australia (CHF) is the national peak body representing the interests of Australian healthcare consumers and those with an interest in healthcare consumer affairs. CHF works to achieve safe, quality, timely healthcare for all Australians, support by accessible health information and systems.

CHF does this by:

1. advocating for appropriate and equitable healthcare
2. undertaking consumer-based research and developing a strong consumer knowledge base
3. identifying key issues in safety and quality of health services for consumers
4. raising the health literacy of consumers, health professionals and stakeholders
5. providing a strong national voice for health consumers and supporting consumer participation in health policy and program decision making.

CHF has three special interest groups operating: consumer involvement in research, digital health and safety and quality in healthcare. These are informal networks of consumers who have self-selected to work more intensively on policy issues.

We have created the Rural and Remote Health Special Interest Group (SIG) to ensure we include the voices of rural and remote healthcare consumers in all our policy and advocacy work. We see this as precursor to establishing a Rural and Remote Health Forum, which is a longer-term goal for CHF.

The SIG is intended to be informal and therefore CHF believe a 'term of reference' is not appropriate. Instead, this informal document outlining the general purpose and operation of the SIG has been developed.

Purpose of the Rural and Remote Health SIG

The SIG was developed to work with CHF to ensure we include the voices of rural and remote consumers in all our policy and advocacy work. Consumer participation in this SIG will help identify what matters to consumers, where improvement can be made and contribute to the cultural changes needed among health professionals, health managers, health services and the wider community that are needed for sustainable improvements in rural and remote health.

The key objectives are to:

- Provide a channel for rural and remote health consumers to raise their concerns and issues with Government and across the broader community.
- Give CHF access to a broader pool of rural and remote consumer and consumer representation opportunities, workshops, focus groups and other consultations.
 - This participation would not be confined to discussions designated 'rural' or 'remote' but would allow rural and remote consumers to have input across the policy spectrum.
- Give Government enhanced access to rural health consumers through CHF's Consumer Representatives Program.

Operation of the Rural and Remote Health SIG

This SIG is advisory to CHF, with final decisions remaining with the CEO and CHF Board.

Co-Facilitators

The SIG will be co-facilitated by a CHF Secretariat member and a consumer. The consumer co-facilitator will be selected by members voting. This process will be coordinated by the CHF co-facilitator. All members will have the opportunity to nominate themselves for the 12-month term.

What will their role involve?

The co-facilitators will work closely to:

- finalise the Agenda Items for each meeting;
- facilitate discussion during meetings;
- document outcomes of each meeting, including any meeting minutes and actions arising;
- distribute meeting documents / Agenda papers and other relevant documents, to members in a timely manner;
- publish a monthly group newsletter; and
- keep SharePoint updated and monitor group discussions.

Members

This SIG is open to all CHF, members, consumer representatives and other interested parties. The maximum number of people within the SIG at any time will be 25-35. This number includes the co-facilitators. This cap helps keep the SIG manageable while assuring diversity.

People can choose to leave the SIG if they no longer have the capacity. An email should be sent to the co-facilitators of the SIG to advise them of your withdrawal. This will not influence your relationship with CHF.

What contribution is expected from members?

Members of the SIG are expected to participate actively in bi-monthly (every second month) meetings via teleconference, including reading circulated papers before the meetings, and to share information. An online forum, SharePoint, has been established for members to engage in friendly discussion, share information and ideas between meetings. Members are expected to treat each other with respect and listen to each other. Members will also have the opportunity to contribute to the content of relevant CHF submissions and publications.

Reporting

- A draft agenda will be distributed to members two weeks prior to a meeting inviting suggestions for additional agenda topics.
- A copy of the final agenda and all papers to be discussed will be distributed to all members at least one week prior to a meeting.

- A draft document highlighting outcomes of meeting, including actions arising will be distributed to attendees of a meeting within one week of a meeting.
- A group newsletter will be distributed monthly.