

Media Release

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Health consumers the key to health reform

‘Health reform must be built upon enabling consumers a greater say in their own health care,’ according to Carol Bennett, executive director of the Consumers Health Forum of Australia (CHF). ‘We welcome the fact that the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission (NHHRC) final report acknowledges the central role of health consumers, and want to translate this acknowledgement into meaningful reform strategies’.

Ms Bennett was speaking at the launch of a joint position paper in response to the NHHRC final report, prepared by a collaboration of peak consumer health organisations.

This unique collaboration, led by CHF, involves Health Care Consumers Association of the ACT; Health Consumers Alliance of South Australia; Health Consumers’ Council of Western Australia; Health Consumers Queensland; and Health Issues Centre (Victoria). The six organisations have come together to comment on shared issues in response to the NHHRC report and the health reform agenda more broadly.

‘We hope that the united voice of these six influential organisations will send a powerful message about the need for consumer engagement in the health reform agenda.’

The joint position paper provides comment across five key areas of particular interest to health consumers:

- Access and equity;
- Consumer engagement and involvement;
- Consumer experience of the health system;
- E-health; and
- Prevention and early intervention.

‘These are just some of the areas where it’s essential that the consumer perspective is captured – and acted upon’, Ms Bennett commented. ‘It’s an exciting time in health reform, but there’s no point introducing system reforms if they’re not going to meet the needs of health consumers.’

Ms Bennett added, ‘We’re delighted to be collaborating with our state peak body colleagues on issues of shared importance. This position paper emphasises our shared view that consumer consultation around the NHHRC recommendations is essential, and that the basis for decisions about the recommendations must be whether consumer health outcomes will improve.’

For further comment and copies of the joint report:

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For comment on state-specific issues, please contact the relevant state peak body.

Consumers shaping health in Australia

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