

# **Good practice in consumer, carer and community participation from Victorian health services**

## **Case Study**

**Community Participation Week**

**Northern Health**

**Community Participation Program**



A Victorian  
Government  
initiative



*Northern Health*

*September 2009*

# Introduction

Consumer Participation is about engaging and working with the community to ensure the delivery of safe, accessible and effective services. This can occur across different levels of:

1. Own Care
2. Service improvement
3. Service Planning

Northern Health is constantly seeking to improve the ways in which we engage with our community through an active community participation program, which is guided by the Department of Health (formerly the Department of Human Services) "Doing it with us not for us policy". Northern Health's Community Participation program is driven by an overarching Northern Health Community Participation Plan that spans a period of three years.

Northern Health's Community Participation Program is driven by a range of Community Advisory Committees and involves consumers at different levels of the organisation. These include the overarching Northern Health Community Advisory Committee (CAC), an advisory committee to the Board, as well as campus Community Participation Advisory Committees (CPACs) at Broadmeadows Health Service (BHS), Bundoora Extended Care Centre (BECC) and Craigieburn Health Service (CHS). The purpose of these committees is to advise Northern Health on strategies to enhance and promote consumer and community participation at all levels within the health service.

One of the ways that Northern Health celebrates Community and Consumer Participation is through an annual Community Participation Week. Since 2005, five Community and Consumer Participation Weeks have been conducted which have provided a platform for staff education about consumer and community participation. This has demonstrated Northern Health's commitment to the relevance and importance of involving consumers across the different levels of participation.

This case study provides an overview of Northern Health Community Participation Week and the results of a survey sent out to all Northern Health staff to evaluate the purpose and benefits of this initiative.

## Rationale

Northern Health Community Participation Week was introduced in 2005 as one of a range of mechanisms used to promote the importance of Consumer and Community Participation within the organisation. Community Participation Week is one of the strategies in the Northern Health Community Participation Plan, which aligns with one of the Department of Health key objectives: *How the service will provide education and training to facilitate staff support of education.*

## Methodology

Northern Health Community Participation Week is driven by an internal Consumer Involvement Steering Group, whose membership includes campus staff with responsibility for Community and consumer participation.

An event or activity is held at most campuses during the week. The event is launched by the Chair of the Northern Health CAC with a different campus selected to host the launch each year. The campus events are promoted throughout Northern Health via email invitation which is accompanied by a flier and timetable of events. Northern Health CAC members and campus Community Participation Advisory Committee members are invited to participate in all the events and activities.

Each year has seen a different theme identified to provide a focus for the presentations and events across all Northern Health campuses. Themes for the past four years have included:

- 2005 What is Community and Consumer Participation?
- 2006 Innovation in Consumer Involvement
- 2007 Community participation – Translating theory into practice
- 2008 Person Centred Practice

Over the years there have been a range of activities and events including:

- Guest speakers on topics linked to the theme for the year
- Information sessions on the principles of community participation
- Cultural entertainment (e.g. dancing, singing, henna painting)
- Community participation poster competition
- Community art display (e.g. Darebin Council Disability Photographic exhibition)

Northern Health's 5th Community Participation Week, held in August 2009, encompassed a series of presentations, performances and community tours held around the theme of "Celebrating Cultural Diversity". Events and activities included:

- A presentation on *Intergenerational conflict in ethnic communities*
- Community tours targeted at newly arrived migrants
- A performance from the Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre "Multicultural Choir", which is made up of people from Assyrian/Chaldean, Vietnamese, Chinese and Philipino backgrounds.

This year a formal evaluation was conducted of staff perception of the purpose and value of the week. The 'Survey Monkey' on line survey tool was used to send out a questionnaire to all Northern Health Staff following the week.

## Outcomes

There were sixty-eight respondents to the "Northern Health Community Participation Week" survey. The survey indicated that, in general, staff members support the Northern Health Community Week initiative. Although only 18% percent of respondents indicated that they attended this year's event, 70% responded that they had attended the event in previous years. The main reason given for **not** attending

any of the events this year was difficulty taking time away from work. Although the events are scheduled to maximise opportunities for staff attendance (i.e. during afternoon nursing handover period) it is likely that this is a key barrier for many clinical staff who have patient care responsibilities. Only 10 % of respondents gave "not interested" as a reason for not attending.

In terms of staff perception of the purpose of community participation week, the majority of respondents (91%) indicated that the purpose of community participation is 'to increase understanding of community participation principles'. This aligns with the suggestions for future weeks where there were requests for:

- Case studies on successful community participation
- Presentations that outline the benefits of community participation to the clinical work and practice of staff and the every day work of the hospital.
- A range of activities to help staff understand the breadth of Community Participation

Other comments in relation to the purpose of Community Participation Week included:

- Increase community awareness of services
- Engage the community to make Northern Health Services safe and efficient for their needs

These comments also align with the strategic direction of the Northern Health 2009-2012 Community Participation Plan, where there are a number of strategies aimed at involving consumers in service improvement or aimed at better understanding the health needs of particular community groups.

## **Recommendations**

The survey has indicated that Community Participation week is a valuable initiative.

The recommendations that can be drawn for future years include:

- Continue to engage guest speakers on specific topics and themes.
- Provide Case studies on successful community participation strategies that outline the benefits of community participation to the clinical work and practice of staff and the every day work of the hospital.
- Conduct workshops on community participation principles.
- Continue to run community tours across the year to promote the health service to groups in the community.
- Explore strategies to enable staff to participate in community participation week events.

## Contact details

[www.nh.org.au](http://www.nh.org.au)

## References

Community Advisory Committee

<http://www.nh.org.au/www/360/1001127/displayarticle/1001318.html>

## Key Contacts

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