



# Annual Report 2007 –2008

## Health Care Consumers' Association of the ACT Inc



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## **Health Care Consumers' Association of the ACT Annual Report 2007-08**

The Annual Report provides our members with a detailed description of the Health Care Consumers' Association of the ACT activities during 2007-2008 against the performance targets presented in the Strategic Plan 2006-2009.

The 2007 – 2008 Annual Report can also be viewed in Portable Document format (PDF) on the HCCA web site at <http://www.hcca.org.au>

Please contact the office if you require the Annual Report in another format.

# Health Care Consumers' Association of the ACT

## Who are we?

The Health Care Consumers' Association of the ACT (HCCA), incorporated in 1978, is the principal health consumer advocacy organisation in the ACT. It has supported and developed health consumer perspectives and policy in the ACT for 30 years. HCCA is a body through which health care consumers can participate in policy, planning and service decisions that affect their health. HCCA works to improve the quality and availability of health services, supports consumers to identify shared priorities about health, and represents these views to the ACT Government.

We are the lead organisation in the ACT advocating for the inclusion of consumers on health committees, consultative fora and planning structures. Our organisation has grown from a small group to a substantial association contributing a consumer perspective across the ACT health system.

HCCA involves consumers through:

- consumer representation
- consumer consultation
- community forums
- health information sessions about health services
- regular HCCA communications

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# HCCA Strategic Plan 2006—2009

## Our Vision

Strong consumer voices are recognized as crucial to improving health for everyone by contributing to a responsive health care system, encouraging innovation in consumer participation, and addressing the structural causes of ill health.

## Our Aim

To influence health policy in the ACT to ensure the consumer perspective is included in decision making in health care.

## Our Values

The organization is underpinned by a commitment to the following values.

- Lived experience as vital to evidence based health policy and services and to consumer participation in planning and decision making.
- Accountability for what we do and for how the health system supports consumers and to being a healthy and strong workplace and organization.
- Strong and effective partnerships, based on integrity and mutual respect, with others including other consumer organizations and groups, governments, other NGOs, health care providers and researchers.
- Respect for the diversity of cultures, individuals and views which exist in our community and organization.
- Working in a representative and respectful manner with members.
- Equitable and fair access to health services and to resources which promote good health.

### Objective 1 Governance

Governing the organization in a responsible and accountable manner reflecting current good practice and positive and respectful relationships between Board, staff and stakeholders.

### Objective 2: Representation and Partnerships

To build the consumer voice in the ACT and create strong partnerships which build the sustainability of consumer voices.

### Objective 3: Health Policy Improvements

To identify key health policies and issues most likely to improve the health system and to make it healthier and more responsive to consumers.

### Objective 4: Communication

To promote the work and goals of consumer participation which contribute to improved health outcomes including utilizing Information Communication Technology (ICT) effectively and appropriately.

## President's Report

At the end of our 30<sup>th</sup> year of existence, it is my pleasure, as President of HCCA, to provide a report on the activities of HCCA for the 2007-2008 financial year. As well as reporting on an active and successful year in which the Association has been able to consolidate its position as the leading avenue for consumer input into the ACT Health system, I would also like to reflect a little on some of our achievements in the longer term.



Early this year, the Executive Committee further refined the four strategic goals identified for the Association last year: governance; participation and representation; health policy; and communication and visibility. We were very grateful for the assistance of Karen Bentley who facilitated the workshop which helped us learn how to work together better as a committee and acknowledge the considerable commonality of purpose we share. Our sub committee processes in each of these areas have been supplemented by input from members not on the Executive Committee and this has enabled us to pursue the work of the Association more effectively and efficiently.

HCCA has built a strong secretariat which will serve members well as we continue to strive to improve health outcomes for consumers of ACT Health Services. Members of the staff team benefit from the enthusiastic guidance of Darlene Cox, who was appointed interim Executive Director earlier in the year on a part-time basis, and we are delighted that she has been able to accept the position on a full-time basis since June. She has recruited four new staff to support members in their representative and policy advisory roles and the secretariat has relocated to much more appropriate accommodation in Building 3 at the Pearce Community Centre.

Darlene took over from the former Executive Director, Fiona Moore, who left us in February following a short but valuable contribution as Executive Director. Other staff members who left HCCA during the year included Stephanie Louise and John Gosling who both had short stints as Policy Officers and Sandra Corey who had ably occupied the Administrative Officer position for a year or so.

One of the areas in which Darlene had provided leadership to HCCA has been in the enhanced use of information technology utilising Web 2.0 techniques. This has led to the repatriation of control of our website and the institution of a blog to highlight issues engaging healthcare consumers in the ACT community.

The core funding provided by ACT Health provides the means by which HCCA can reach out to the people in the ACT and beyond to ensure that we are reflecting community opinion in the material we feed back to the Department and the Minister about the state of ACT Health. All performance indicators for the Consumer Representation Program were again met as the program maintained its strength and momentum under the triennial funding arrangements.

HCCA has continued to convene a range of consumer oriented policy discussions throughout the last 12 months. Given more stability in staffing this year, HCCA has had greater capacity to participate in policy development work, both in terms of responding to requests for comment from the Department and by engaging our membership regularly in policy forums to provide ACT Health with a more representative and comprehensive consumer perspective on particular issues. This includes the development of policy positions for the Association, reviewing and revising existing ACT Health policies, and encouraging them to utilise processes to make that policy work accessible to interested parties in the ACT community.

Our Association will become stronger and more sustainable through the implementation of the communication strategy we have developed during the year that improves our organisation's visibility in the community and maintains a high level of timely and informative communication with its members and consumer representatives about health-related and organisational matters.

HCCA has continued to build partnerships and effective working relationships with Government, Community and Consumer Groups. Regular meetings are held with the ACT Minister for Health, and I participate on the ACT Health Council (which our Secretary Kate Moore chairs) and the Joint Community Government Reference Group; while Marion Reilly was the Chair of the ACT Aged Care Advisory Council.

As noted in last year's report, there is still not a consistent approach to consumer participation across all sectors within ACT Health and a major aspect of work in the coming year will therefore be to help us continue to push for implementation of a system wide consumer participation strategy as ACT government policy. The regular quarterly meetings with the ACT Health Executive are continuing, and we maintain contact with the Opposition spokesperson on health and other key members of the Legislative Assembly through meetings to discuss matters of interest which are significant to members of the Association.

As always, I'd like to acknowledge the tireless work of our members and consumer representatives. My personal thanks and those of the whole Executive Committee go to you, as without your ongoing support the Association would not have the prominence it does enjoy in the ACT health community. It is through you that the Association continues to provide a strong and articulate health care consumer voice in the ACT. The two training programs conducted this year have again brought many new consumer representatives and much new energy to the Association.

Finally, I would like to thank the Executive Committee for their support throughout the year. In particular, I welcome new members Bev McConnell who joined us as Treasurer in April, and Judith Manning who has assisted us to identify and address our governance responsibilities through development of a risk management framework. I would also make note of the contributions of Paula Calcino who retired from the Executive Committee during the past year after a long term association in which she served as our nominee to SHOUT (where she was Chair for the past four years), and Kate Moore who has been the HCCA Secretary for several years and a committee member since 2000, but has stated her intention not to seek re-election to the committee at this year's AGM.

Russell McGowan  
President

## Tribute to Phillip Gleeson

This year we lost a valued member and strong consumer advocate, Phillip Gleeson.

Philip was a longstanding member of the Health Care Consumers' Association of the ACT. He was an amazing person with a wonderful sense of humour and strong respect for others. He made a valuable contribution to facilities for people with MS in the ACT as well as to the advancement of health care services to consumers generally.

He was one of our most respected consumer representatives and contributed significantly to the health system's understanding of the value of consumer perspective in dealing with intractable problems.

Phillip was a gifted narrator and creative writer, and at a time when there is consideration of a national compact between government and the community sector, it is worth noting his contribution to the shaping of the Social Compact in the ACT.

We have been fortunate to have had Philip as our friend and colleague, and we will miss him greatly.

# Highlights of 2007-2008

## Highlights of the 2007—2008 year include:

- HCCA turned 30 in 2008.
- We moved offices in March in order to provide HCCA staff and Consumer Representatives with a quality work and meeting place. This enabled us to retain our strong ties to SHOUT members, People with Disabilities ACT and Women's Centre for Health Matters. We have improved office equipment for staff and have also used funds to fit out a meeting room for consultation forums and meetings with members and Board of Management.
- We have a full complement of enthusiastic and highly trained staff
- Used our networks to contribute to public discussions around health services



## Governance

- All Board members, the Executive Director and members of strategic committees participated in a strategic planning day in March 2008 that reviewed the Strategic Plan.
- Regular meetings of the Governance sub-committee to review existing policies and identify gaps
- We welcomed Bev McConnell to the Board in the role of new line Treasurer



Russell McGowan, Marion Reilly and Darlene Cox

## Representation and Partnerships

- In 2007—08 we continued to build partnerships and effective working relationships with Government, community and consumer groups. In particular, we worked with ACT Health to drive the ACT Health Consumer and Carer Participation Framework that will be implemented in the next financial year.
- The Executive Director and Board members had regular meetings with the ACT Minister for Health and the Executive team of ACT Health
- We held six Consumer Representative Forums, providing opportunities for consumer representatives to meet and network and to participate in discussions about health system issues.
- We held three Health Issues Group meetings, providing a forum for discussion on health issues that do not necessarily relate to committees and projects our consumer representatives are involved in. This year topics have included Nurse Practitioners, Health Services Planning in the ACT, the Capital Asset Development Program and e-health.



## Health policy improvements

There was increased demand for HCCA input for health policy. We provided written feedback to ACT Health on a number of policy issues, including chronic disease strategy, consent to treatment, and mental health co-morbidity policies.

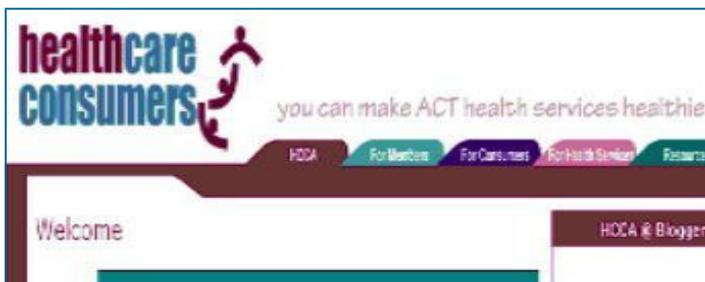
We also prepared responses to the draft services plans for diabetes services, cancer services, surgical services as well as holding consultative forum for the Community Based Health Services Plan.



Tony Greville, Jenny Berrill and Andrew McNee (ACT Health) met to discuss the Community Based Health Services Plan.

## Communication, Visibility and Membership

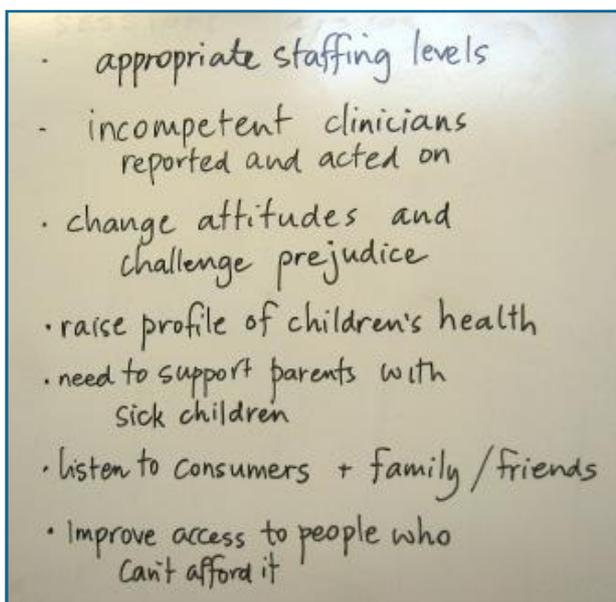
- This year HCCA started to use social media in a pro-active way. We established a HCCA Blog for the public, members and representatives; and we also started using a blog for staff communication.
- We continued to build the public profile of the organization and its capacity to speak as an advocacy group for health care consumers through the media and other promotional opportunities and events



In 2007–08 we re-designed the HCCA website to make it more user friendly for both consumer representatives and members, and the general community



We wrote, designed and distributed 25 issues of the Association's newsletter, *Consumer Bites*. This publication was distributed in hard copy, in accessible electronic formats and on the HCCA website in pdf format.



Some of the ideas trainees had for improving the health system.



Russell McGowan, interviewed by ABCTV in February 2008

## Executive Committee

**Russell McGowan****President**

Chair, Communications, Visibility and Membership Sub-Committee

Member, Governance Sub-Committee

Russell McGowan is a bone marrow transplant survivor who became interested in the health consumer movement as a result of his experiences in treatment during the early 90s. He has been President of the Association since 1998, and was also Vice President of the Consumers' Health Forum of Australia for four years. He participates on a range of national and territory level strategic committees including the Boards of the Australian General Practice Network, the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards and the ACT Health Council, and acts as the main spokesperson for HCCA in the ACT media.

**Marion Reilly****Vice President**

Chair, Government Sub-Committee

Chair, Consumer Representative Sub-Committee

Marion joined HCCA in the late 1990s as she is committed to the values of consumer health partnerships that should guide the planning and delivery of health services. She has served on the Executive Committee for a number of years and is an active consumer representative on various consumer committees in the ACT Health system. She has particular interests in the chronic disease and aged care. She has been a member of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Aged Care and currently is a member of the Chronic Disease and Primary Health Care Steering Committee. Marion works for a professional industry association and previously was public servant for more than 20 years in the both the Northern Territory and the ACT.

## Executive Committee

**Bev McConnell**  
**Treasurer**

Bev has worked in the APS in Canberra and Sydney for most of the past 17 years, mainly in communications and broadcasting. Her Main areas of interest in consumer health care are electronic health records and prescribing, and health technology research and development...She is a current member of the ACT Hepatitis C Council.

**Kate Moore**  
**Secretary**  
Member, Governance Sub-Committee  
Advisor on Health Issues and Policy

Kate became committed to developing an effective consumer voice in health policy in the early 1980s after working as an Adviser to the then Commonwealth Minister for Health and Community Services, Dr Neal Blewett. In that position she saw first hand how powerful interest groups shaped the delivery of health care, and how that resulted in a system that suited the interests of providers rather than consumers. After leaving her position with Dr Blewett, Kate became the Execu-

**Adele Stevens**  
**Member**  
Member, Communication Visibility Member Sub-Committee

**Judith Manning**  
**Member**  
Member, Governance Sub-Committee

**David Lovegrove**  
**Member**

## Consumer Representatives Program 2007—2008

HCCA nominated many representatives on health committees during 2007-2008. This dedicated and passionate group contributed to better decision making and helped ensure consumers play an integral role in shaping better health outcomes for the ACT community. Their presence has been sought and valued on a range of committees.

Effective consumer representation is both essential and challenging to achieve. To provide committees with a trusted consumer voice, HCCA uses best practice in appointing, training and supporting consumer representatives. Consumer representatives must have the confidence of consumers and consumer organisations and be able to articulate consumer concerns within a broader range of views.

We would like to thank all the people who have contributed to improving our health system through their work as consumer representatives in 2007—2008

<i>Tony Bailey</i>	<i>Ian Macdonald</i>
<i>Louise Bannister</i>	<i>Vince Maguire</i>
<i>Joanne Baumgartner</i>	<i>Russell McGowan</i>
<i>John Belcher</i>	<i>Kate Moore</i>
<i>Chris Bennett</i>	<i>Ross Morton</i>
<i>Jenny Berrill</i>	<i>Deb Nesbitt</i>
<i>Jo Bothroyd</i>	<i>Marion Reilly</i>
<i>Pam Boyer</i>	<i>Elizabeth Scrivener</i>
<i>Paula Calcino</i>	<i>Catherine Settle</i>
<i>Kristine Clement</i>	<i>Sue Sheridan</i>
<i>Darlene Cox</i>	<i>Adele Stevens</i>
<i>Pat Daniels</i>	<i>Denis Strangman</i>
<i>Lorraine Downey</i>	<i>Anna Saxon Taylor</i>
<i>Nicholas Farley</i>	<i>Diana Terry</i>
<i>Erica Fisher</i>	<i>Alan Thomas</i>
<i>Phyllis Fleming</i>	<i>Fiona Tito-Wheatland</i>
<i>Peter Garas</i>	<i>Ian Trehwella</i>
<i>Phillip Gleeson</i>	<i>Anne Maree Vogt</i>
<i>Janne Graham</i>	<i>Angela Wallace</i>
<i>Roger Killeen</i>	<i>Edward Wallace</i>
<i>Val Lee</i>	<i>Ngairé Whitehead</i>
<i>David Lovegrove</i>	<i>Ted Whitehead</i>

# HCCA Staff

**We have an energetic and committed team at HCCA who work to support our members and consumer representatives and ensure that there is a strong consumer voice in the planning, delivery, review and monitoring of health services in the ACT.**

**Executive Director, Darlene Cox (commenced Acting Executive Director in February 2008, confirmed in the position June 2008)**

Darlene is responsible for the effective management and ongoing development of HCCA and achievement of the Association's objectives. This includes: strategic advice, leadership of staff, maintaining effective working relationships across the health system, financial management and the development of members and member services.



**Administrative Officer, Lydele Thoresen (commenced January 2008)**

Lydele manages many of the activities that keep the HCCA office running smoothly including telephone and reception, managing paper and electronic files, processing accounts and correspondence, maintaining databases and providing support for meetings.



**Policy Officer, Tony Greville (commenced February 2008)**

Tony works to ensure health care consumers participate effectively in all aspects health policy development in the ACT. This is done through the development and implementation of processes to engage our members, other consumers and relevant organizations in the development and dissemination of policy for HCCA.



**Consumer Representatives Program Coordinator, Kerry Snell (commenced June 2008)**

**Consumer Representative Training and Support, Lou Bannister (commenced February 2008)**

Kerry and Lou are responsible for directly managing the program, training and support of consumer representatives, developing new and reviewing existing resources and support material, liaising with health service providers about how to involve consumers and promoting the consumer representation process to consumers and the wider Canberra community.



**Communications Officer, Robyn Hall (commenced February 2008)**

Robyn is responsible for HCCA's external communication and media strategies. She is also the editor of *Consumer Bites*, and assists with the preparation of publications, the redesign and update of the HCCA website.

## Staff changes over the last financial year

We have been fortunate to have the following skilled and enthusiastic people work with our organisation over the past twelve months:

**Marion Reilly**

Interim Executive Director  
From April – July 2007

**Sandra Corey**

Administration Officer  
Resigned: September 2007

**Stephanie Louise**

Policy Officer  
Commenced August 2007  
Resigned November 2007

**John Gosling**

Administrative and Policy Support  
Contract November 2007 – January 2008

**Fiona Moore**

Executive Director  
Commenced July 2007  
Resigned February 2008

**Kylie Martins**

Commenced: January, 2008  
Resigned March 2008

**Anne Maree Vogt**

Consumer Representatives Support  
Commenced March 2008  
Anne Maree continues to work with HCCA on a casual basis supporting our Consumer Representative Program

**Darlene Cox**

Consumer Representative and Policy support  
September 2007 – January 2008