

## UPDATE FROM THE OFFICE

There has been much discussion about the COVIDsafe app this week. Around five million people have downloaded the app and the Federal and local governments are strongly advocating that people download it. Their argument is that you are taking an important step in protecting your health and helping Australia stop transmission of COVID-19. Having the app will speed up the process of contacting people who may have been exposed to coronavirus.

Downloading the app is voluntary. It has not been mandated by government. We are taking a similar approach to the one we took about the My Health Record. We respect the rights of health consumers and carers to make informed decisions about their health. So, we encourage you to consider the benefits, risks and alternatives and then decide.

Our colleagues at Health Consumers Queensland have developed a useful guide to support your decision-making. They have reviewed the benefits and risks and also considered the alternatives to downloading the app. They consulted with consumers and reviewed government and independent studies in preparing the guide. The guide is [here](#).

There are other links you can refer to. For general information about the app including download links and a short video describing how the app works, [click here](#).

For information about COVIDSafe in other languages (there are 63 languages to choose from on top left of the website), go to the [Department of Home Affairs website here](#).

The ABC also has an interesting article that looks at how an app on your smartphone can protect you from COVID-19 [here](#). [Digital Rights Watch](#) have shared an explainer on the privacy impacts of the app based on information that they have learned about it. You can read their perspective [here](#). [Public Health Association](#) of Australia support the use of the app, saying it will only be effective if enough of us are prepared to use it. You can read more [here](#).

On 7 May 2020 the state peak consumer groups convened an online forum to discuss COVIDsafe. Next week we will report on the event.

*Darlene Cox  
Executive Director*

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## HCCA EVENTS

### Members' Forum by Zoom

11am - 12pm  
Wed 27 May 2020

**Most HCCA events have been cancelled until 30 June 2020 at this stage.**

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# COVID19 UPDATE

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## Hospital Visitation Restrictions Still in Place

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ACT Chief Health Officer Dr Kerry Coleman has reminded the community that health services in the ACT still have visitor restrictions in place at key sites. The restrictions apply to all Canberra Health Services campuses, including Canberra Hospital, University of Canberra Hospital, Community Health Centres, as well as Calvary Public and Private Hospitals and National Capital Hospital.

“We are in a very strong position here in the ACT, but Canberra’s hospitals would like to remind people of the restrictions they have in place to reduce the spread of COVID-19 among staff, patients, their friends and relatives,” Dr Coleman said.

“We know that hospitals can be potential transmission hubs with a population that is already compromised by episodic and chronic health issues.” Restrictions imposed by Canberra’s hospitals include limiting visitor numbers to ‘one visitor per patient per day’ at their facilities.

“These health services would also like to remind people, where possible, not to bring children to hospital when visiting patients. This policy will be applied with compassion and common sense. For example, children who are well will still be able to visit a parent or sibling accompanied by an adult.”

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## Health Service Change: Early Pregnancy and Parenting Support Phone Line

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An early pregnancy and parenting support phone line has been established to support women with early pregnancy, maternal and child health, breastfeeding and emotional wellbeing concerns. You can call 5124 1775 from Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 5pm. Please leave a voicemail with your name, best contact number and reason for your call and a health professional will call you back within one business day. Find out more here.

Canberra Health Services has developed some specific information for pregnant women in the ACT that provides about the precautions they need to take, the effects of coronavirus on pregnant women, and the safety precautions that have been put in place for patients, visitors and staff. You can read about this here.

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## Advice Web Page and Helpline for People with a Disability

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There is a Department of Health web page specifically for people with a disability. The page has advice and information tailored to people with disability who may have higher rates of health issues including chronic conditions and a weakened immune system. Many people with disability also rely on support and assistance from family members, carers and support workers. You can find it here.

Contact the Disability Information Helpline on **1800 643 787** to talk about your concerns in relation to COVID-19. For example, people can call the Helpline if their support worker has not turned up or their provider has stopped services; or if it’s hard to get essential items like food or medications. The Helpline can provide information, and refer people to advocacy, counselling and other supports.

There is also a Disability Information Helpline available for people with disability who need help because of coronavirus (COVID-19). The Helpline is free, private and fact-checked and can help families, carers, support workers and services.

The Helpline is available Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm (AEST) and Saturday and Sunday 9am to 7pm (AEST). It’s not available on national public holidays. For more information, click here

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## COVID-19 Surge Centre

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Work on the temporary COVID-19 facility on Garran Oval is progressing well. Delivered in partnership with Aspen Medical, this purpose-built facility has been designed to maximise staff and patient safety in a COVID-19 environment.

The temporary facility will be known as the *COVID-19 Surge Centre* and construction should be complete in May. As this is a rapidly changing situation the ACT Government is planning for the worst scenario whilst hoping for the best outcome.

The COVID-19 Surge Centre will only become operational if Stage 3 (Surge) of the Territory-wide COVID-19 Response Plan is triggered. This would mean that the existing Emergency Departments at Canberra Hospital and Calvary Public Hospital would be operating beyond their flex capacity.

The Centre will retain the ability to flex up and down rapidly depending on the demand at the time. At full capacity, it will have six resuscitation bays, 32 acute non-admitted treatment bays and 12 short stay beds.

Aspen Medical have been contracted to provide the medical, nursing and clinical administration workforce for the COVID-19 Surge Centre. Aspen will be given a three-week lead-in time to bring the COVID-19 Surge Centre online and fully staff it. Canberra Health Services (CHS) will support the facility with pathology, security, linen, waste collection and food services.

Throughout the COVID-19 response, the role of the facility will be monitored, and changes may be made as the situation requires.

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## Medicare Ineligible Patients Can Access Free Healthcare For COVID-19

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A reminder that testing and treatment for COVID-19 is free for everyone. If you're living in Canberra and are ineligible for Medicare, if you test positive for COVID-19 there won't be any out-of-pocket costs for your treatment at a public hospital.

Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 such as a fever, cough, shortness of breath or a sore throat can now be tested at any of the respiratory testing clinics across Canberra. If you have any of these symptoms, we encourage you to get tested. For locations and more information [visit here](#) or call the COVID-19 Helpline on 6207 7244, 8am-8pm daily.



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## Attending a Telehealth Appointment With a NSW Health Provider?

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If you are attending a telehealth appointment with a NSW health provider there is a technical support phone number you can use. This is (02) 8644 2867.

Some issues that may create technical issues concern the device you are using and the type of browser (searching tool). If you have an apple product use Safari as the preferred browser.

If you have a non-apple product use google chrome or Firefox. Explorer doesn't work as well as others. Also be aware that using a personal device at your workplace where you use the work wifi, the video call may be blocked for security reasons.

For tips on *Making the most of your appointment by telehealth or face-to-face* go to the HCCA [blog post here](#).

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## Support for Temporary Visa Holders and International Students

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Over the past month, there has been significant public and organisational advocacy for people on temporary visas to be able to access JobKeeper support and remain connected with work. The Australian Government has so far excluded this category of worker for support. As a result, many Canberrans on temporary visas have now lost work and have no income or support.

Temporary visa holders and international students affected by COVID-19 who are ineligible for Commonwealth assistance programs, will now be able to access support through a \$450,000 [ACT Government support package](#). Canberra is a *Welcoming City* and a *Refugee Welcome Zone* and the ACT Government is acting to support some of the most vulnerable people affected by this pandemic with emergency relief. This new

emergency funding will help provide the basics for people on temporary visas.

This latest package for temporary visa holders adds to the Government's [Jobs for Canberrans Package](#), which prioritises immediate short-term employment for casual or semi-skilled workers and those ineligible for the Job Seeker and Job Keeper programs.

The [Canberra Relief Network](#) is also providing food for temporary visa holders and ACT funding is available to help Canberrans facing homelessness, or experiencing [domestic and family violence](#). For more information call the ACT government COVID-19 Helpline on 6207 7244 between 8am and 8pm daily or [click here](#). This information is available in 107 languages through the website Google translate option.

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## HCCA COVID-19 Consumer Issues Register Reports

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HCCA established a COVID-19 Consumer Issues Register in March 2020. The Register summarises issues raised by consumers and the HCCA actions in response. They are published weekly.

You can find the regular reports that summarise the issues raised [here](#).

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## POLICY AND RESEARCH UPDATE

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### More Medicine Ingredient Information on the TGA Website

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You may recall that in October 2019, HCCA put in a submission to the [Therapeutic Goods Administration](#) (TGA) about making more information about medicine ingredients available to consumers.

TGA has been working to display this information in the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods (ARTG), on their website. All medicines and biologicals listed in the register will now display the names of excipient ingredients. This means that in addition to the active ingredients of your medicine, that give the product its medicinal effect, you can now find out about its inactive ingredients. Examples of inactive ingredients include:

- preservatives
- colours
- flavours
- fillers that help a tablet stick together

These changes will benefit consumers with sensitivities, allergies, or any need to avoid particular ingredients contained in medicines. You can read more about these changes in TGA's [media release](#), or check out [information for consumers about medicine ingredients](#) on the TGA website.

*Kathryn Briant  
Policy Officer*



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# HEALTH LITERACY UPDATE

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## Important to Maintain Your Usual Regular Health Checks

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Local GP Dr John Deery has urged Canberrans to continue to seek regular care from their usual GP:

“I want to remind Canberrans that it’s essential that they continue to speak with their usual GP about their existing conditions and ongoing health care at this time. Please don’t put off seeing your GP or getting a diagnostic test out of fear of contracting COVID-19. I wish to reassure you that the three practices running a Respiratory Clinic will still see their usual patients for their ongoing needs in a safe area with a separate entrance and strict infection control measures.”

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) has just launched their Expert Advice Matters TV and online campaign to encourage the public to continue consulting their regular GP.

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## Dickson Community Health Centre Refurbishment

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The Dickson Community Health Centre (DCHC) at the Dickson Shopping Centre is undergoing refurbishment over the coming months. This new **Inner North Walk-in Centre** will add to the suite of services already provided such as podiatry and maternal and child health. While the upgrade takes place, these services are being delivered from the other Community Health Services (Belconnen, Gungahlin, Weston Creek and Tuggeranong).

The work includes the refurbishment and reinvigoration of the Centre which is expected to be open around September of 2020. The program of works include:



- internal demolition commenced early April
- internal construction commenced early April with completion expected late May 2020
- external works commenced mid April are expected to be completed in June 2020

The integration of the Walk-in Centre with the Community Health Centre provides additional capacity to offer more health services in the one location and the refurbishment will create new treatment and consulting rooms.

This nurse led Walk-in Centre will be the fifth facility across Canberra and will expand access to free primary health care and advice for a range of minor injuries and illnesses. Walk-in Centres are open 7 days a week from 7.30am to 10pm every day, including public holidays. You can find out more about Nurse led Walk-in Centres [here](#). For more information or if you have questions about this project, you can email [CHS.CapitalProjectDelivery@act.gov.au](mailto:CHS.CapitalProjectDelivery@act.gov.au)

Services offered at each Centre are identified in the table at right.

### Walk-in-Centre

Cuts, bruises, abrasions and burns
Common illness like cold and Flu
Sinus infections and tonsillitis
Strains, sprains, minor limb fractures
Skin conditions and rashes
Ear infections – middle and outer
Mild Gastroenteritis

UTI's, Scabies, Mastitis, Conjunctivitis ...

### Community Health Centre

Podiatry
MACH – Maternity Nursing

*Claudia Cresswell  
Health Literacy Officer*

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# HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATE

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## The SPIRE Project

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Thank you to everyone who completed the online feedback form on the consumer-centric principle for the SPIRE Project. We appreciate you taking the time to provide your views on this issue.

This will be one of several principles for the framework that has been developed by Major Projects Canberra to guide the development, design and implementation of the SPIRE Project. Lineaire Projects, who is coordinating this work, will be reporting on the outcomes of the survey to the SPIRE Consumer Reference Group at its next meeting on 13 May 2020.

The current focus for the SPIRE Project is the Request for Tender process to engage a contractor to design and build the SPIRE building. Early design work on the SPIRE Project has been suspended until the contractor has been engaged. In the meantime, further work to review the Models of Care documentation will be undertaken.

If you are interested in getting involved in the SPIRE Project as a consumer representative, please contact me on [annemeuronen@hcca.org.au](mailto:annemeuronen@hcca.org.au) to obtain more information.

*Anne Meuronen*  
Community Participation Coordinator, Health Infrastructure

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# CONSUMER REFERENCE GROUP REPORTS AND INFORMATION

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## Quality and Safety - New Resource: Break the Chain of Infection Poster

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The [Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care](#) (the Commission) has much information regarding Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) infection prevention and control and medicines.

The Commission has produced a new resource to illustrate the chain of transmission in the context of COVID-19 and to highlight what measures can be implemented to interrupt the spread of this infection. This has been a collaboration with the New South Wales Clinical Excellence Commission. The [Break the Chain of Infection poster](#) is available for download on the [Commission's website](#). For more information, visit their [COVID-19 page here](#).

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## Health of Older People - Non-Compliance with the Quality Standards Aged Care Compliance Tracker

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The [Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission](#) (Commission) seeks to protect and enhance the safety, health, well-being and quality of life of aged care consumers; and promote consumers' confidence and trust in the quality and safety of Australian Government funded aged care services.

When an Assessment Team identifies evidence during a performance assessment that the care and services provided in a service do not meet the Quality Standards, the Commission will consider whether the provider complies with the [Quality Standards](#). The Commission's response to non-compliance will be risk-based and proportionate to ensure the service returns to compliance and addresses any risks to the safety, health and wellbeing of consumers.

You can check individual service providers at the [non-compliance checker here](#).

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## Health of Older People - Older Australian's Support Line and Information

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The [Older Person's COVID-19 Support Line](#) provides advice, support, referrals and connection for Older Australians. You can call the Support line on 1800 171 866. If you would prefer to speak with [Council on the Ageing \(COTA\) Australia](#) directly (or just want a chat) call 1300 COTA AU (1300 268 228).

The Older Person's COVID-19 Support Line is supported by funding from the Australian Government. [COTA Australia](#) also has a comprehensive COVID-19 (Coronavirus) information page on their website. You can check it out here. There is also lots of information on their [Facebook page](#) here.

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## ITEMS OF INTEREST

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### SURVEY: Consumer Insights into the CovidSafe Tracing App

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On 26 April 2020 the Australian Government released the COVIDSafe app via the Apple and Android App stores. The app allows the tracing and finding of people who have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19. Several million Australians have now downloaded the app and several key health bodies have supported it, although other expert groups such as the [Law Council of Australia](#) and [Digital Rights Watch](#) believe there are issues that need to be addressed.

Consumers Health Forum of Australia (CHF) has launched a survey on Australia's Health Panel

[asking for consumer insights into the recently released COVIDSafe tracing app](#). As governments across the world grapple with how to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important that the voice of the consumer is heard and helps to shape the Australian healthcare system.

Consumers can sign up to Australia's Health Panel [here](#). By joining Australia's Health Panel you can have a say on the COVIDSafe app but also other health issues and questions that arise over the coming months and years.

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### Organ/Tissue Donor Hero Night

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[Donor Families Australia Inc.](#) is a national member-based independent support and advocacy group comprising families who have donated their loved ones' organs and tissue. Membership is free and gives donor families a voice:

- to speak with and to support each other
- to advise policy makers what is important to Donor Families
- to connect the community to a group that knows the experience of donation so they might come to understand it better

**Hero Night** highlights the importance of organ donation. You can read more about organ and tissue donation at the Australian Government [Organ and Tissue Authority](#) here and the [ACT Donate Life Agency](#) here. Donor Families Australia ask us to:

- Put a Light ON for all Organ Donor Hero's
- Put a Light ON if you are a donor family
- Put a Light ON If you are a recipient
- Put a Light ON if you need a transplant
- Put a Light ON If you support organ and tissue donation
- Put a Light ON if you know an Organ Donor Hero
- Put a Light ON if you have registered to be an organ and tissue donor

**Date:** 6pm, Monday 18 May 2020  
**Venue:** your home, Australia  
**Info:** [here](#)

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## Understanding Medical Research: Your Facebook Friend is Wrong

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How can you tell if the bold headlines seen on social media are truly touting the next big thing or if the article isn't factual? Understanding Medical Studies, an on-line course from [Yale University](#) provides the tools and skills to critically interpret medical studies and determine the difference between good and bad science. The course covers study-design, research methods and statistical interpretation as well as the dark side of medical research - fraud, biases, and common misinterpretations of data. Lessons will highlight case-studies from real-world journal articles. Find out more [here](#).

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### Useful Newsletters

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#### ACTCOSS

- CALD e-Notice [here](#)

#### Consumers Health Forum of Australia

- COVID-19 edition [here](#)

#### Public Health Association of Australia

- Latest edition [here](#)

#### ACT Health COVID-19

- Latest update [here](#)

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## COVID-19 RESOURCES

For up to date information about COVID-19 check the following websites and social media channels:

**ACT Health:** <https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/>

**Healthdirect:** <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/coronavirus> (This has information in other languages)

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/ACTHealthDirectorate/>

**Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/ACTHealth>

**ACT Government Helpline:** Ph 6207 7244 8am-8pm daily or [www.covid19.act.gov.au/contact-us](http://www.covid19.act.gov.au/contact-us)

**Disability Information Helpline:** Ph 1800 643 787 8am-8pm Monday to Friday and 9am-7pm Saturday and Sunday.

**The Older Person's Support Line:** Ph 1800 171 866.

**Commonwealth Department of Health:** <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>

**ACT Communicable Disease Control (CDC) team:** Ph 5124 9213 or 9962 4155 after hours.

#### Symptom checker:

[https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/1504974/CV\\_Identifying-symptoms.pdf](https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0003/1504974/CV_Identifying-symptoms.pdf)

If you are concerned and want further information you can call the Australian Government **Coronavirus Health Information Line** on [1800 020 080](tel:1800020080) 24 hours/day, seven days a week.

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## CONSUMER PARTICIPATION

HCCA Consumer Participation Training was due to be held this May. It has been cancelled and we will schedule it later in the year. Please contact Karen James at [karenjames@hacca.org.au](mailto:karenjames@hacca.org.au) or 6230 7800 to be notified when the training is to be held again.



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## Clinical Review Committee – CHS

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Canberra Health Services (CHS) is seeking a consumer member on its Clinical Review Committee. This high-level committee oversees clinical review and audit processes, and critically assesses, reviews, reports and makes recommendations for assessment and action.

This position will suit an experienced consumer representative with an interest in quality and

safety and clinical practice. For the foreseeable future, meetings are likely to involve videoconferencing. The representative will need a willingness and ability to read and consider a range of meeting papers before meetings occur.

More information about this opportunity and terms of Reference are available [here](#). You can nominate for this opportunity [here](#). This opportunity closes on **Tuesday 19 May 2020**.

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## OTHER COMMITTEE VACANCIES

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### Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation – Department of Health

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The Australian Technical Advisory group on Immunisation (ATAGI) provides advice to the Minister for Health on the *Immunise Australia Program* and related issues.

ATAGI advises the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee on evidence relating to new, existing and emerging vaccines and their effectiveness and use in Australian populations. It consults with the national Immunisation Committee to produce the Australian Immunisation Handbook for the approval of the National Health and Medical Research Council. It also consults with the Communicable Diseases Network of Australia and Expert Advisory Committees of Therapeutic Goods Administration on matters concerning implementation of immunisation policies procedures and vaccine safety. Further information about ATAGI is available [here](#).

Consumers Health Forum is seeking expressions of Interest for a consumer representative. The current term ends in June 2021, the new consumer representative will allow a 12-month transition period. The appointment is for three years from June 2020 at the discretion of the Minister for Health, the Hon Greg Hunt MP. There are six meetings/year and the Department of Health will cover travel costs and sitting fees.

Interested consumer representatives need to complete a CHF nomination form, available [here](#), a letter of endorsement from HCCA and a short CV in PDF format. Expressions of Interest close at midnight on **Sunday 17 May 2020**. For information contact Ghislaine Martin [g.martin@chf.org.au](mailto:g.martin@chf.org.au) and [karenjames@hcca.org.au](mailto:karenjames@hcca.org.au) to request a letter of support or telephone 6230 7800.

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#### Contact Us

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#### Consumer Bites is the newsletter of the **Health Care Consumers' Association**.

Please note that Consumer Bites provides a small snippet of health related articles our members might find interesting to consider, ponder and analyse. The HCCA does not purport to endorse any opinions or the veracity of claims contained within the articles.

*Editor: Darlene Cox*