

## UPDATE FROM THE OFFICE

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HCCA staff are continuing to work from home and all HCCA events will be online until the end of July at this stage. One of the challenges of this time is the uncertainty and unpredictability of what will happen. We simply do not know.

For many, the use of video conferencing has been a positive outcome of the pandemic. For a couple of years, we have had requests for people to join our events virtually, via video conference. We had struggled to work this out but given our recent experience – which is considerable – we now feel confident that we can make this shift. We are very aware however that some of our members are uneasy with this technology so we are working with them to build their skills and confidence so they can participate.

This week the Interim report from the [ACT Legislative Assembly's Select Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic Response](#) was published. You can read the report [online here](#). People will be interested to read the details regarding the COVID-19 Surge Centre on Garran oval. It is included at pages 6-7 in the report.

The Government has been reminding us that while restrictions have eased, our responsibility hasn't. We have to continue to maintain 1.5 metres physical distance from others and practise good hygiene. I have started to see hugs and handshakes creep back into social gatherings. We are also required to limit public gatherings to no more than 10 people, and to stay home if you feel unwell. Staying at home as much as possible and avoiding large crowds is still the best way to protect yourself, and your family, from any potential risk of infection. You can find out more about [changes to restrictions here](#).

People have been asking us about the precautions, for those aged over 70 years old, that need to be taken as the restrictions ease. We have requested information from the Chief Health Officer on this. They are preparing community information and we will share it as soon as it becomes available.

*Darlene Cox  
Executive Director*

## HCCA EVENTS

### Members' Forum by Zoom

11am - 12pm  
Wed 27 May 2020

### HCCA Consumer Issues Report Weeks 6 and 7

- [Click link here](#)

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

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## COVID19 UPDATE

Canberra Health Services has made some changes to services for Women, Youth and Children to ensure services are delivered in a way which minimises exposure to potential infection for both patients and staff.

### Canberra Health Services - Changes to Paediatric and Neonatal Services

Canberra Health Services wants to assure parents that if your child is very unwell it is still safe, and encouraged, to bring your child to hospital for medical care. The paediatric emergency room is working to triage children quickly and move them to single rooms. Social distancing will be maintained at all times and children are not required to wait in the general Emergency Department waiting room.

Currently, all paediatric and neonatal follow-up clinic appointments are being run via telephone or telehealth if you and your doctor agree that is suitable in your circumstances. If your child needs to be seen face-to-face to receive the care they need (such as for a fracture, burn or postsurgical review), clinic days have been scheduled to minimise the number of patients waiting at any one time to assist with social distancing.

Canberra Health Services has also developed a paediatric outreach service to reduce the need for hospital visits for particularly vulnerable children and families. They will contact you directly if this service is suitable for your family.

Day stay services are continuing as normal and other surgeries which were previously suspended will now be progressively reintroduced. If your child's surgery was postponed, you will be contacted to make a new appointment once the restriction on that surgery is lifted.

While visitors are restricted throughout the paediatric and neonatal wards, parents are welcome to visit and stay with their children. However, only one parent can visit at any time. You can find more information about changes to [paediatric and neonatal services here](#).

### Canberra Health Services - Maternity Services

For pregnant women, the Canberra Maternity Options service will continue. Initial telephone appointments may be followed by a face-to-face assessment for women with complex needs or vulnerabilities. If you would benefit from a face-to-face assessment due to your specific circumstances, tell the midwife your concerns over the phone during your initial appointment. If you are pregnant and have not yet accessed pregnancy care you can call Canberra Maternity Options on 51429977 to discuss your needs and preferences. Information about Canberra Maternity Options is available [here](#).

Unless the rate of Covid19 infection in the Canberra community grows significantly, all the usual options for birth remain available, including home birth and the Birth Centre. However, your prenatal care will be provided as a mix of telephone or telehealth and face-to-face appointments. Your midwife can provide you with a list of these appointments in advance.

While you can't currently tour Canberra Health Services maternity facilities, attend an early pregnancy information session or childbirth classes in person, these are now being run online. You can register to attend the Early Pregnancy Information session [here](#). You will need to ask your midwife to let you know when and how you will be able to book online for the *Pregnancy to Parenting* and *Next Birth after Caesarean* courses.

Visitors are currently restricted to one prenatal or birthing support person and one visitor per patient per day on the postnatal ward. Families are asked not to bring children to visit wherever possible. However, this policy is causing some families anxiety. If this policy is distressing to you, you can apply for an exemption to the visitor restrictions on compassionate grounds. This is assessed on a case by case basis. If you need an exemption, please talk to your midwife as early as possible to ensure your exemption is in place before your baby arrives.

More information about the changes to maternity services is available [here](#).

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## COVID-19 ACT Government Disability Strategy

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The ACT Government has released the COVID19 Disability Strategy.

The ACT Government has heard the concerns of Canberrans with disability and the disability sector and acknowledges that people with disability may face a range of additional and unique challenges and risks, during the COVID-19 health emergency. Many people with disability are at increased risk of contracting COVID-19 and experiencing more severe health and social impacts from the virus and the associated public health measures that have been put in place. You can read the [ACT Government Disability Strategy here](#).

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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 are [here](#).

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## POLICY AND RESEARCH UPDATE

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### Telehealth in the ACT

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The ACT's [Capital Health Network \(CHN\)](#) has partnered with [Healthdirect](#) to provide the [Video Call platform](#) free to health services in the ACT. This will help support GPs, specialists and allied health professionals to deliver consultations using telehealth until June 2021.

Telehealth is part of the response to COVID-19 and the recent expansion of the [Medicare Benefits Schedule for telehealth services](#). Since the April 2020 launch of the Video Call platform to ACT health care providers, 21 health services have been supported to adopt it so far. Some outpatient appointments through Canberra Health Services are also using the Video Call platform.

For consumers, the Video Call platform is secure and simple to use. Patients do not need to set up an account, have special software or dial-in details. This helps reduce the need for extra resources to support video consultations.

The CHN website now includes a page of [COVID-19 resources and information](#). The information includes some resources for supporting consumers during the pandemic.

HCCA recently published a [blog post on making the most of your appointment – telehealth or face-to-face](#). If you have any kind of health care appointment coming up, check out our top tips!

*Kathryn Briant  
Policy Officer*

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# HEALTH LITERACY UPDATE

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## Diabetes Multilingual Resources

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Diabetes Australia produces several multilingual resources available to the public. The resources have been developed through the (NDSS). Translated information for non-English speaking members of the community living with diabetes is available on the NDSS CALD 'Information in Your Language' page.

There are many diabetes translated resources, in more languages, including written and audio-visual resources. Each of the languages has a fully translated landing page and a 'read aloud' option to enhance user experience. The following links are the landing pages of the languages targeted in the campaign:

- [ndss.com.au/arabic](https://ndss.com.au/arabic)
- [ndss.com.au/dari](https://ndss.com.au/dari)
- [ndss.com.au/farsi](https://ndss.com.au/farsi)
- [ndss.com.au/chinese-simplified](https://ndss.com.au/chinese-simplified)
- [ndss.com.au/turkish](https://ndss.com.au/turkish)
- [ndss.com.au/vietnamese](https://ndss.com.au/vietnamese)

This link has translated postcards to print for communities. For more information contact Vania Khoury, National CALD Priority Lead, on 0439 930 939 or email [V.Khoury@diabetesaustralia.com.au](mailto:V.Khoury@diabetesaustralia.com.au)

*Yelin Hung  
Multicultural Liaison Officer*

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## Not Sure if You Need a Doctor? Symptom Checker Can Help

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Symptom Checker can help you decide what to do next if you are unsure whether you need to see a doctor. This is an excellent tool on the HealthDirect website where you answer some questions and get advice.

The healthdirect Symptom Checker guides you to the appropriate healthcare action: if you need to see a doctor or go to your nearest hospital or emergency department. It helps you understand symptoms and possible signs of illness, causes and complications. With Symptom Checker you can find out:

- what to do – advice on the next healthcare steps, whether it is self-care, talking to a health professional, going to a hospital or calling triple zero (000)
- where to go – information on local healthcare services
- more about your symptoms – links to further information about your symptoms and possible causes, from trusted Australian healthcare organisations.

Consumers have found it very reassuring, helpful, and easy to use. It is worth noting that the approach taken with this tool is a cautious one and you are frequently referred to a health practitioner. If you don't have access to the internet call HealthDirect on 1800 022 222. A specialist nurse is available 24 hours a day to answer your questions.

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## Diabetes - Be Connected with Telehealth

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Diabetes Australia has great online information about telehealth for people with diabetes. They specifically outline when it would be more appropriate to see your practitioner face to face compared to a phone or video consultation. This can give you confidence in pursuing telehealth if its new for you.

They also suggest that its important now more than ever to stay connected to family, friends and support networks. Even with COVID-19 restrictions ending, vulnerable people may choose to continue to have limited physical contact. They suggest ways to stay in touch are:

- Organise a virtual dinner party via an online platform like Zoom, Skype or House Party
- Organise regular calls and keep in touch via text
- Chat using online platforms like What's App or Messenger
- Chat with your neighbour over the fence
- Join in conversations on social media platforms

For more information on telehealth or staying connected [click here](#).

*Claudia Cresswell  
Health Literacy Officer*

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## HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATE

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### The SPIRE Project Update

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Considerable progress is being made with the demolition and building works that need to be undertaken in preparation for the construction of the new emergency, surgical and critical health care facility (the SPIRE Project) at Canberra Hospital.

The demolition work on Building 8 is well underway. The ACT Government has issued a request for tender for a contractor to design and build the new three-storey building which will contain a purpose-built facility to house the Canberra Sexual Health Centre as well as training, research and administration functions.

The Request for Tender for Building 8 closes on **25 May 2020** and can be viewed at [tenders.act.gov.au](https://tenders.act.gov.au).

The ACT Government has also recently submitted the [Development Application](#) for Building 8 (refer DA 20237104). You can view the Development Application and provide your comments (referred to as lodging a representation) on the [ACT Planning website](#). Submissions close on **10 June 2020**.

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### Temporary Carpark at Former CIT Woden Site

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The ACT Government has also submitted the development application for the 1100-bay temporary car park located off Hindmarsh Drive at the former CIT site. This site will provide car parking for Canberra Hospital staff and construction workers during the construction of the SPIRE project. The Development Application should be available for public comment in the near future. For more information please refer to [planning.act.gov.au](https://planning.act.gov.au).

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### Expansion of the Intensive Care Unit at Canberra Hospital

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The ACT Government has submitted a [Development Application](#) for the expansion of the existing Intensive Care Unit on Level 3 Building 12 at the Canberra Hospital (refer DA 202037051). You can view the Development Application and provide your comments (referred to as lodging a representation) at the [ACT Planning website](#). Comments close on 27 May 2020.

*Anne Meuronen  
Community Participation Coordinator, Health Infrastructure*



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# CONSUMER REFERENCE GROUP REPORTS AND INFORMATION

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## Quality and Safety - The Difference Between Viral and Bacterial Infections

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We are four months into a global virus outbreak, and public health awareness could well be at an all-time high. Which is why it is astonishing to discover that 92% of Australians don't know the difference between a viral infection and a bacterial one.

The statistic comes from a [survey](#) carried out by CSIRO in March to inform the [OUTBREAK](#) project – a multi-agency mission aimed at preventing outbreaks of antibiotic-resistant bacterial infections. The survey of 2,217 people highlights a disturbing lack of knowledge about germs and antibiotics. It reveals 13% of Australians wrongly believe COVID-19, a viral disease, can be treated with antibiotics, which target bacteria. Paul De Barro, Senior Principal Research Scientist, CSIRO, discusses the issues around this in [The Conversation report here](#).

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## ITEMS OF INTEREST

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### HCCA SURVEY: Looking After Your Health with a Long-Term Condition

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If you have one or more long-term health conditions, HCCA would love to hear from you in an online survey. It asks about:

- how you usually look after your health
- any people and organisations that help you to do this
- anything that makes this difficult, and
- any ways that COVID-19 has changed how you look after your health.

You can take part if you have any health condition that lasts more than a year, and means you need ongoing medical care – for example you may take a prescription medication or see a doctor regularly. The survey is part of a HCCA project about consumer and carer experiences of long-term conditions.

It's supported by the ACT Health Directorate and is part of our Community Health Literacy Project.

We estimate the survey will take about 15 minutes. You can [find it here](#).

There is also a survey for carers, parents and guardians of someone with a long-term condition [here](#). Please let us know if you'd prefer to complete a paper survey. HCCA will post the survey along with a pre-paid return envelope.

You can also take part in a telephone Zoom or skype conversation about your experience – this will take about 30 minutes and no more than an hour. If you'd like to do this or have any questions about the project please contact Sarah Spiller on 6230 7800 or [sarahspiller@hcca.org.au](mailto:sarahspiller@hcca.org.au).

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### SURVEY: Work and Care in the Time of COVID-19

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This University of Melbourne research project is about how work – paid and unpaid - is changing due to the social and economic disruptions caused by COVID-19. Specifically, how COVID-19 is affecting how men and women are managing paid work, housework and caring responsibilities for children, older people and other family members. The aim is to understand the issues and challenges faced during this period to inform research and policy.

You will be able to provide information about the experience and challenges of providing unpaid care during COVID-19/Coronavirus. This will be hugely important to debates about gender equality, paid work, housework and care. If you would like more information [click here](#) or contact Professor Lyn Craig ([lyn.craig@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:lyn.craig@unimelb.edu.au)) or Dr Brendan Churchill ([brendan.churchill@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:brendan.churchill@unimelb.edu.au)).

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## CHF Webinar on What Next for Consumers

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How the community has responded to the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on our lives has been a key feature in Australia's success to date in quelling the spread of the virus. As most states of Australia begin cautiously stepping down their COVID-19 restrictions, the decisions of individual consumers and communities takes on more importance.

To foster consumer discussion on the steps ahead, Consumers Health Forum of Australia (CHF) has arranged for two Deputy Chief Medical Officers, Professor Michael Kidd and Dr Nick Coatsworth to share their thoughts and respond to consumers' questions in a webinar. Consumers are encouraged to send in questions and comments by Friday 22 May 2020.

**Date:** 2.30pm, Tuesday 26 May 2020

**Register:** [Here](#)

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## National Reconciliation Week: 27 May – 3 June 2020

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Reconciliation is a journey for all Australians – as individuals, families, communities, organisations and importantly as a nation. At the heart of this journey are relationships between the broader Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The anniversary dates which mark National Reconciliation Week (NRW) are significant milestones for reconciliation: **27 May - the 1967 Referendum, and 3 June - the High Court Mabo decision.**

The Reconciliation Australia theme for #NRW2020 – **In This Together** – is now resonating in ways that could not have been foreseen when it was announced last year, but it reminds us whether in a crisis or in reconciliation, we are all #InThisTogether.



**In This Together** encourages all Australians to reflect on the part they play – whether big or small – on our journey towards reconciliation. This unity of purpose creates a shared sense of belonging and identity; and this identity must value and include the histories, cultures, and rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. National Reconciliation Week posters and digital resources are available to download and print.

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## National Palliative Care Week: 24 – 30 May 2020

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Palliative care helps people living with a life-limiting illness to live as well as they can by managing pain and symptoms to ensure their quality of life is maintained. Palliative care identifies and treats symptoms which may be physical, emotional, spiritual, or social.

National Palliative Care Week is an annual awareness raising week organised by Palliative Care Australia and supported by the Department of Health to raise awareness and understanding about palliative care in the Australian community. You can read more about it [here](#).

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## Bus Stop Closures Near Canberra Hospital

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Due to road works from Monday 25 May 2020, several stops will be closed along Hospital Road and Gilmore Crescent. The completion date for these works is unknown. The routes affected are the R6 and the AMC shuttle service. You can find the [details here](#).

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## HCCA Telehealth Fact Sheet

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The HCCA Telehealth Fact Sheet is now available in the Health Literacy Resources for Consumers section on the HCCA website [here](#).

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## Useful Newsletters

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### ACTCOSS

- COVID-19 e-Notice [here](#)

### ACTCOSS

- Autumn Update [here](#)

### ACT Health COVID-19

- Latest update [here](#)

### Canberra Multicultural Community Forum Inc

- May E-Newsletter [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 has cancelled all face to face events that were planned until the end of June. We advise consumer representatives not to attend face-to-face meetings of the committees that they are members of. Consumer representatives can continue to contribute to committee work remotely. If you need support to do this please contact Karen James.

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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### Bariatric Surgery Advisory Committee – Canberra Health Services

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The Canberra Health Services Bariatric Surgery Advisory Committee assesses and ranks the suitability of patients for publicly funded bariatric surgery. The committee considers the medical summaries of those patients who have engaged with the Obesity Management Service for a minimum of six months and who meet the surgery selection criteria, provides expert advice and monitors matters such as wait times and the number of surgeries performed each financial year. The committee operates within the Division of Medicine.

Meetings are held quarterly, and out of session decisions may be made via teleconference or email.

This opportunity would suit an experienced consumer representative with knowledge of or an interest in bariatric surgery and quality and safety issues. More information about this opportunity is available [here](#). You can nominate for this opportunity [here](#). This opportunity closes on **Tuesday 9 June 2020**.

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## OTHER COMMITTEE VACANCIES

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### Consumer Advisory Group – Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP)

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The [Royal Australasian College of Physicians \(RACP\)](#) connects, represents and trains Physicians and trainee physicians across Australia and New Zealand.

The RACP has established a consumer advisory group to provide strategic advice on the integration of patient centred care in the College's professional standards and education and integrates consumer priorities into policy and advocacy activities.

The RACP is seeking a consumer member with a disability background and/or sector experience and highly developed skills and expertise in health consumer affairs, including the ability to represent a broad consumer perspective, understanding of the complexity of medical practice and health systems, excellent communication skills and the ability to work collaboratively and build positive partnerships, a commitment to valuing diversity and maintaining high professional and ethical standards.

The appointment is for two years from September 2020. There will be four meetings each year, either in person or by teleconference and RACP will pay sitting fees and cover travel costs.

More information on the Consumer Advisory Group and a position description is available [here](#). To apply, please complete the Expression of Interest form and attachments [here](#) and send to RACP Senior Executive Officer Jae Redden ([jae.redden@racp.edu.au](mailto:jae.redden@racp.edu.au)). The closing date is **midday Tuesday 16 June 2020**.

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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*