

UPDATE FROM THE OFFICE

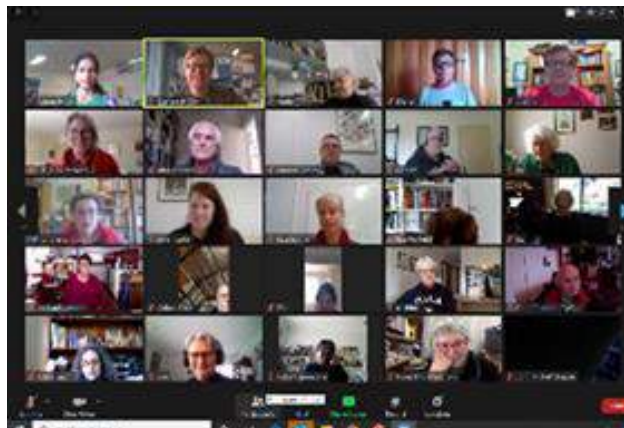
This week we held our first online members forum. There is a report in this issue.

There was a level of experimentation in the meeting as we explored new ways to interact. We are using Zoom as our platform of choice. The transition to online meetings can be a bit confusing and uncomfortable but we are doing our best. On the whole, the forum went well and we have had positive feedback. People certainly told us that while they enjoy the information, they are missing the interaction that would be part of a face to face meeting. As we become better at using videoconferencing, we will be able to use virtual 'breakout rooms' (smaller chat groups within the main one) for small group discussion. As one member said, "it is certainly a bit different to face-to-face".

Until now, our members forums have been held over three hours and include guest speakers and of course some food to enjoy together. We may not be able to do that again for a while.

For the rest of 2020 we are setting up regular Health Issues Online Forums for members to join, to hear from health services and the government about issues of importance to us. This means we still get to hear about health services and have opportunities to ask questions. We will include details in our newsletter, so keep an eye on this. We will record these sessions where possible so people can watch them in their own time.

*Darlene Cox
Executive Director*



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HCCA EVENTS

Health Issues Online Forum – TCH Master Plan

- 2-3pm, Thursday 18 June 2020 by Zoom

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

COVID19 UPDATE

Step 2.1 of Canberra's Recovery Plan from Midnight, Friday 29 May 2020

The ACT COVID-19 [Easing of Restrictions Roadmap](#) aligns with the Australian Government's [Framework for a COVIDSafe Australia](#). This document gives an easy way for Canberrans to be aware of when and how the Government plans to move out of restrictions that were put in place in March 2020 to limit the spread of COVID-19 in our community.

Easing restrictions will happen in a gradual way that will enable us to carefully monitor the situation in the ACT, and in a way that is best suited to the unique circumstances of our jurisdiction. The nature of COVID-19 means that we must remain flexible and readily able to respond to the changing circumstances of the pandemic. There will be a number of check points along the way so that each stage of restrictions can be assessed, before moving to the next stage, ensuring the health and safety of our community.

While restrictions are easing, our individual responsibilities have not. Stay home if you're unwell, maintain physical distancing and practise good hand hygiene. If you have symptoms, please get tested at one of the ACT's [testing facilities](#). You can find the Canberra Recovery Plan [here](#).

Canberra Health Services - Visitor restrictions

Canberra Health Services visitor restrictions remain in place at key health sites in the ACT due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The restrictions apply at:

- Canberra Hospital
- University of Canberra Hospital
- Community Health Centres
- Calvary Public and Private Hospitals, and
- National Capital Private Hospital.

The restrictions are in place to reduce the spread of COVID-19 among staff, patients, their friends, and relatives. Restrictions include limiting visitor numbers to 'one visitor per patient per day'. Where possible, they ask people not to bring children to hospital when visiting patients.

Information for NGO Health Service Providers

The [ACT Government *Information for non-government community, disability and health service providers in relation to COVID-19*](#) page is now live.

The information will assist non-government community, disability and health service providers (NGOs), including staff, volunteers and clients, to protect themselves and the community during the COVID-19 crisis. The page provides resources and materials for NGOs related to COVID-19 such as:

- preparedness and business continuity
- pandemic planning and managing risk
- personal protective equipment (PPE)
- management and care of people who are in isolation or quarantine at home
- useful links

Support for Minister's Call for National Anti-Racism Strategy

A joint statement by the Minister for Multicultural Affairs Mr. Chris Steel MLA and the Minister for Justice and Mental Health, Mr. Shane Rattenbury MLA condemning the rise in racist incidents during the COVID-19 pandemic has been welcomed by the ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS) and the Canberra Multicultural Community Forum (CMCF).

This condemnation came after the ACT Discrimination Commissioner Karen Toohey noted that reports to the ACT Human Rights Commission of racist incidents had increased in recent weeks, including against health workers and retail staff.

Minister Rattenbury encouraged victims of racist acts to report those attacks and asked that Canberrans call out racist behaviour when they see it where safe, or otherwise stand and bear

witness – a position ACTCOSS and CMCF support wholeheartedly.

CMCF Chairperson, Chin Wong, said: “ACTCOSS and CMCF look forward to supporting the ACT Government in their effort to address racism in our community. We encourage victims and witnesses to report racism and discrimination directly to the ACT Human Rights Commission.” In February, the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) called for the establishment of a specific COVID-19 national anti-racism strategy and campaign to address the rising tide of subtle racism and discrimination in the community.

Reports of racism and discrimination in the ACT can be made directly to the ACT Human Rights Commission on 6205 2222 or human.rights@act.gov.au. You can read the joint ACTCOSS/CMCF media release [here](#).

POLICY AND RESEARCH UPDATE

Community Pharmacy Licensing

Did you know that in the ACT, a community pharmacy must be licensed according to the Public Health Act 1997 and must comply with the requirements of the Public Health (Community Pharmacy) Code of Practice 2016? Community pharmacies must also comply with requirements of the Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 2008. This Act establishes authorisations and criteria to manage medicines and poisons in the ACT.

Some community pharmacies in the ACT also dispense methadone, buprenorphine or buprenorphine/naloxone for the treatment of drug dependency. These pharmacies require an additional license to enable them to be an Opioid Dependency Treatment Centre.

The dispensing of methadone, buprenorphine or buprenorphine/naloxone must be in line with the National Guidelines for Medication Assisted Treatment of Opioid Dependence. Dispensing of

these medicines should also comply with Opioid Maintenance Treatment in the ACT: Local Policies and Procedures wherever possible. In addition, all pharmacists dispensing treatment must successfully complete training for the safe administration and dispensing of opioid maintenance treatment. These requirements are outlined in the Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods (Guidelines for treatment of opioid dependency) Approval.

To ensure that medicines and poisons are prescribed, stored and supplied in accordance with the relevant legislation, the ACT Health Protection Service performs routine pharmacy inspections. These inspections can occur at any reasonable time and without prior notice. [Click here to read more about Community Pharmacy Licensing](#).

Revised PBS Listings for Antibiotic Use

The Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) recently recommended changes to the maximum quantity and repeats for some antibiotic prescriptions. From 1 April 2020, changes came into effect for the top five most commonly prescribed antibiotics on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). These antibiotics are amoxicillin, amoxicillin with clavulanic acid, cefalexin, doxycycline and roxithromycin.

Maximum quantities of these antibiotics will be amended to reflect a full course of antibiotic treatment (to be dispensed in one prescription for specific indications). Short courses of antibiotics will continue to be available with nil repeats.

These changes are intended to encourage clinicians to prescribe antibiotic repeats only when clinically indicated, to help reduce inappropriate prescribing and increase quality use of antibiotic medicines. [Click here to find out more about these changes to the PBS.](#)

*Kathryn Briant
Policy Officer*

HEALTH LITERACY UPDATE

Hospital Road Services Relocation

The SPIRE Project will deliver a state-of-the-art emergency, surgical and critical health care facility on the Canberra Hospital campus. For the SPIRE Project to proceed, essential services located along Hospital Road (which goes through the campus) need to be relocated.

To undertake this critical infrastructure work, most of Hospital Road will be reduced to one-way (south-north) traffic from Monday 25 May for several months.

This means you will be able to access Hospital Road from Gilmore Street in Garran, but only travel as far as the large traffic island outside the main entry to the hospital. You will be able to loop around this section to return to Gilmore Street. From the Bateson Road end (near the multistorey carpark) you will be able to travel all the way through to Gilmore Street.

It will allow for the addition of a lift from Hospital Road to take visitors to the new Building 8.

What Matters to You - COVID-19 ACP Conversation Starters

Many important conversations are occurring right now, as people come to grips with COVID-19 and what it might mean for them. [Advance Care Planning Australia](#) have developed conversation starters specifically for the pandemic that can help spark and guide discussions with loved ones. Find them here:

- conversations starters for [individuals and families](#) and
- for [health professionals](#) seeking ways to broach the topic with older people, and those with chronic illness.

Simulated Telemedicine Demonstration of COVID-19

This is a simulated conversation between a patient and their doctor about what COVID may mean for them. The doctor asks some questions about what matters and recommends making the equivalent of an Advance Care Plan. It is a ten-minute YouTube clip, but anyone would benefit from watching. It is very sensitively done. You can watch it [here](#).

Changes to Slip Road Adjacent to Building 12

From Friday 15 May, the slip road adjacent to Building 12 on the Canberra Hospital campus will be restricted to one-way traffic due to construction work. During this time, traffic will flow in a southerly direction only (as if headed to Tuggeranong direction).

Access to the Building 12 and accessible helipad car parks remains via the Yamba Drive slip lane only. Drivers will be unable to turn left into the slip road from Bateson Road (near the Emergency Department).

Temporary signage will be in place for motorists and pedestrians will be diverted. This arrangement will remain in place from mid-May until the end of October 2020.

Podcast: What to do When You Are Weighing Up Health Advice

In an era where anyone can google the answer to a health question and lots of people take health advice that is shared on social media, it can be difficult to assess the most reliable information. How do you know if what you are reading about online reflects the best models of evidence and will work in practice?

The speakers for this ABC Radio podcast are Leanne Wells, CEO of the [Consumers' Health Forum](#) and Rod Lamberts, Deputy Director of the [Australian National Centre for the Public Awareness of Science](#) at the ANU. The [podcast can be found here](#).

Dietary Information via Telehealth at University of Canberra Student Clinics

You can get dietetic services at a significantly reduced cost (\$40 or \$30 concession) with final year student dietitians from the University of Canberra. All sessions are conducted under the

supervision of an experienced Accredited Practising Dietitian. The consultations are currently being conducted via telehealth. For more information [click here](#).

*Claudia Cresswell
Health Literacy Officer*

HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATE

The SPIRE Project Update

The ACT Government has released its May 2020 Project Update on the new critical health facility to be built at Canberra Hospital (known as the SPIRE Project). You can access the [May 2020 Project Update](#) and other information on the [SPIRE Project](#) on the ACT Government [YourSay](#) website.

In response to feedback from the community and clinicians, a physical connection between the new facility and Building 2 across Hospital Road has been added to the design. This will allow patients, visitors and clinicians to move between existing facilities and the new building at ground level, and will be protected from the elements. Public vehicle access to the new Emergency Department via Gilmore Crescent will not be possible, reducing traffic in the surrounding suburban streets.

As a result of these changes, there will be an upgraded main entry to the Canberra Hospital in Building 2 facing Yamba Drive (the entrance next to the existing Emergency Department). Work will be done in the main Reception in Building 2 and on Hospital Road to accommodate the link and the new main entrance. For more information and to view the plan see the [May 2020 Project Update](#).

*Anne Meuronen
Community Participation Coordinator, Health Infrastructure*

CONSUMER REFERENCE GROUP REPORTS AND INFORMATION

Quality and Safety - Capability, Comfort, Calm - High Quality Health Care

It's a simple concept: most patients define health in terms of capability (the ability to do what's important to them), comfort (relief from the pain and anxiety) and calm (reducing or eliminating the chaos in health care). By understanding the three dimensions for different conditions, care givers can offer more effective treatment that's better aligned with patients' health and lives and improve care by measuring outcomes across all three areas.

In this video, transformative care leaders demonstrate how this intuitive but revolutionary approach is transforming health around the world - and how innovators can accelerate the transformation. You can [watch it here](#).

Health of Older People – Easing of Restrictions Advice

A number of people over 70 have asked about specific advice from the Chief Health Officer since many of the restrictions have been eased. We received this advice and wanted to share it with you.

As we ease strict physical distancing restrictions in the ACT, people who are vulnerable to COVID-19 are asking how they can safely resume some of their normal activities. For example, people who are at increased risk from COVID-19 have asked whether it is now safe for them to leave the house to go shopping, visit a café, the library or see friends or family members. While there is no evidence of community transmission in the ACT and no or very few cases, people who are vulnerable to COVID-19 can leave their home, including to attend public places. To further reduce the very low risk of acquiring and spreading COVID-19 everyone, including people who are at increased risk from COVID-19, are being advised to practise physical distancing, carry out frequent hand hygiene and avoid contact greetings, like hugs or handshakes. We would also strongly recommend that people who are vulnerable to COVID-19 avoid large gatherings or crowded places, where it might be difficult to maintain physical distancing.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

HCCA Health Issues Online Forum – Canberra Hospital Master Plan

HCCA invites you to our first Health Issues Online Forum. We plan to run these monthly to keep you updated on health issues that are important to consumers in the ACT and surrounds.

Our first update is with Liz Lopa who will discuss the Canberra Hospital master plan and the northside hospital. Liz is the Executive Group Manager, Strategic Infrastructure Division, ACT Health Directorate. The details are as follows:

Date: 2 – 3pm, Thursday 18 June 2020

Zoom login: [here](#) (meeting ID: 876 0628 2265, password: 859988)

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

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.

HCCA Members' Forum Report: 27 May 2020 by Zoom

Kathryn Briant gave a report on the HCCA Survey Results on Consumer Experiences of Looking for Information About COVID-19 (Coronavirus). We ran four surveys over four weeks in March/April 2020 to get a snapshot in time of where consumers look for trusted information, and what questions they had about COVID-19 that were not being answered. Rapid data analysis each week helped us to quickly turnaround reports and recommendations to ACT Health, Canberra Health Services, Capital Health Network, and other stakeholders, so that this information could be used to inform and improve communication to consumers. Our timely work in this area has been valued by government and stakeholders, and it has helped us in our advocacy. You can read our reports [here](#).

Sarah Spiller shared what we have learnt from HCCA's COVID-19 Consumer Issues Register which has been live since mid-March. The Register is a way for HCCA to document the concerns and issues we've heard from HCCA members and the public and keep track of the action we've taken. Some key themes over the weeks include:

- Almost every week, most questions are about reducing COVID-19 transmission. This has included many questions about **social distancing** and **how people can protect themselves and others in their household from getting sick**.
- In the early weeks of the Register we heard questions about how COVID-19 can affect the **body**. In recent weeks, we have heard more concerns about the negative impact of social distancing on **mental health and wellbeing**.
- We've also had many questions about **getting other health needs met**. This includes questions about changes to health services, and more recently many questions about telehealth – including reports of difficulty accessing interpreters during telehealth consultations.

- In the first week of the Register, the biggest concern was **where to go for trusted information about COVID-19** but in later weeks we have heard fewer concerns about this. This might reflect growing confidence about where to go for information, and trust in official advice about COVID-19.
- Recently, questions about **relaxing restrictions** include concern that people may stop social distancing, and questions about how and when people can return to activities such as hydrotherapy and water exercise.

If you have a question about COVID-19, please don't hesitate to contact HCCA to add it to the Issues Register. We may be able to follow up the issue or share some useful information with you and others. You can read about the issues [here](#).

Kate Gorman has been working with ACT Health to create a COVID-19 Ethical Decision Making Framework for the ACT. This work began in late March and is focused on how decisions will be made to allocate intensive care resources, particularly ventilators, should the demand for them outstrip supply in the ACT. Although this scenario now looks much less likely, it is important to finish it and have it available to support consumers and staff should the situation occur. The Canberra Health Services Ethics committee began the work, taking two weeks to produce some guidance on the subject. HCCA has and continues to advise on community participation for this work. A very short window of opportunity was provided at that time for community groups to comment/input into the work. HCCA provided a submission, which focused on ensuring that:

- decisions are made in consultation with consumers
- clinician's own views on quality of life are not part of decision-making processes
- health inequities are recognised
- health care and support are provided for consumers and families when patients are not admitted to intensive care
- good, up to date data is available to inform decision making
- there is transparency and accountability in the process

As the anticipated crisis has not (yet) eventuated, time is now available to seek deeper community involvement and form all stakeholder's input into the Framework document. Professor Imogen Mitchell has tasked a team of researchers at the ANU to do this work, which is anticipated to be finalised and endorsed in early July. If you are interested in this work, please contact Kate on kategorman@hcca.org.au.

World No Tobacco Day: 31 May 2020

The theme for [World No Tobacco Day 2020](#) is "Protecting youth from industry manipulation and preventing them from tobacco and nicotine use". [Cancer Council ACT](#) supports WHO's global campaign and encourages the ACT community to be more aware of the risks of youth nicotine and tobacco use, including e-cigarettes.

Education and support are key in preventing uptake, as well as encouraging a quit attempt. The best place to start is to speak to a GP or a trained counsellor from [Quitline](#) on ph 137848. Cancer Council ACT is continuing to deliver smoking cessation education sessions (currently on Zoom). For more information email: reception@actcancer.org.

Forum: How to Balance COVID-19 Economic and Health Recovery

Can we kickstart the economy without increasing infection risk? Will those at heightened risk need to double down on isolation? Is it time to roll out personal protection equipment?

Victoria's Chief Health Officer, Professor Brett Sutton, Behaviour Change specialist, Luke van der Beeke and Health Economist Professor, Jonathon Karnon will hold an online health forum.

This event in the Health Insights series will provide an opportunity to delve into how government policy is affected by the foibles of human psychology, and what this means for Australia's recovery plan – will it stay on track, both in terms of the economy and human lives?

Date: 11am-12.30pm, Tuesday 16 June 2020

Register: [here](#) - online, via Zoom (further details will be provided after registration)



SURVEY: A Mental Health Navigation Portal for Young People in the ACT

The Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing have partnered with The Australian National University to develop a new online portal for young people seeking mental health support. The Portal will be a one-stop shop for children, young people and their parents to find information and access mental health services.

The team has developed two surveys to hear from young people and from their parents or carers about what information and tools this website should provide.

Consumer feedback will help design the portal, and ensure young people have access to quality mental health support where and when they need it.

If you are a young person aged between 16 and 25 or a parent or carer who wants to see better access to high quality mental health information and service for young people online, please consider completing the survey.

- If you're aged 16-25, click [here](#)
- If you're a parent or carer, click [here](#)

Forum: Revitalising Democracy Online

Faith in our political system is declining. Campaigning on important policy issues such as climate change falls on deaf ears in government, and party memberships are shrinking as members find it difficult to make an impact. How then can citizens make a real difference in our democracy?

The Canberra Alliance for Participatory Democracy (CAPaD) is hosting a conversation with Rob Salter on Revitalising Democracy: Possibilities for Electorate Level Mobilisations to Achieve Better Parliamentary Representation. Read the background *A Third Domain of Political Engagement: Learning from Indi* [here](#).

In this online forum, Rob will briefly outline these ideas and discuss them with participants, including the question of how they might be implemented.

Date: 2 - 3.30pm, Sunday 31 May 2020

Register: [here](#)

Useful Newsletters

Canberra Lung Life

- May edition [here](#)

ACT Seniors and Veterans Newsletter

- May edition [here](#)

Public Health Association of Australia

- May edition [here](#)

ACT Health COVID-19

- Latest update [here](#)

NACCHO

- Latest health alert [here](#)

Women with Disabilities ACT

- May edition [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

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

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.

RECENT APPOINTMENTS

- Fiona Tito-Wheatland – Clinical Review Committee, Canberra Health Services
 - Jenny Berrill – Our Care Safety and Quality Committee, Canberra Health Services
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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.

COMMITTEE VACANCIES

Bariatric Surgery Advisory Committee – Canberra Health Services

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**.

OTHER COMMITTEE VACANCIES

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

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 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). The closing date is **midday Tuesday 16 June 2020**.

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.

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