



Community Development Policy

March 2026

About Health Care Consumers' Association Inc

The Health Care Consumers' Association (HCCA) is a health promotion charity and the peak health consumer advocacy organisation in the Canberra region. We work to improve the quality and safety of health services and advocate for health equity for people living in the ACT and surrounding areas who access health care in the ACT.

Our work focuses on systemic advocacy, health promotion and education, and consumer empowerment.

HCCA provides a voice for consumers on health issues and provides opportunities for health care consumers to participate in all levels of health service planning, policy development and decision making.

HCCA involves consumers through:

- consumer representation, and consumer and community consultations,
- training in health rights and navigating the health system,
- community forums and information sessions about health services, and
- research into consumer experience of human services.

More information about HCCA can be found at www.hcca.org.au

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Suggested citation: Health Care Consumers' Association. *Community Development Framework*. Canberra, Australia: Health Care Consumers' Association. March 2026.



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1. Purpose

This Policy sets out our approach to community development. It guides the ways in which HCCA staff, Executive Committee and members promote collective action to reduce health inequities and contribute to the development of communities in our region.

The Health Care Consumers' Association (HCCA) advocates for a health system that supports consumers to be active in managing our own health and delivers safe, high quality health care that meets the needs of individuals and communities.

HCCA is a voice for consumers on health issues and provide opportunities and support for consumers and communities to participate in all levels of health service design and planning, policy development, research and decision making.

HCCA is an inclusive organisation, and we recognise and respect the diversity of consumer experiences and perspectives. We value the contributions of our members, allies and partners.

Community development is an important element of our work. HCCA listens and supports community members to take collective action on issues which are important to them. Community development considers community members to be experts in their lives and communities and values their knowledge and wisdom¹. HCCA fosters community connections and relationships. These relationships enable us to identify issues important to the community and support and advocate for community driven shared solutions.

HCCA aims to empower consumers to have control and understanding of their own health and increase their awareness of, and ability to influence, social determinants of health² to promote better health outcomes and wellbeing across our communities.

To achieve this we tailor our health literacy products and services to meet the demands of our community. We develop resources and services based on what the community tells us they need.

¹ Australian Institute of Family Studies (2017), access in March 2022 <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/expert-panel-project/what-community-development>

² World Health Organization (2022), Social determinants of health, accessed in February 2022 https://www.who.int/health-topics/social-determinants-of-health#tab=tab_1

HCCA's Community development activities contribute specifically to Goals 1 and 2 of our [Strategic Plan \(2025 – 2030\)](#):

GOAL 1: Support Health Consumers to be active in managing their own health.

We build consumer empowerment by providing information and developing tools and skills to improve health literacy.

We develop and tailor resources in response to community needs and embed genuine co-design in our work.

We strengthen consumers' confidence and ability to manage their own health, advocate on their own behalf and improve their health outcomes.

GOAL 2: Improve safety and quality of health services.

We work with our members, networks and health services to influence strategic priorities, monitor performance and co-design health services that meet the needs of consumers.

2. Guiding Principles

HCCA acts in accordance with our [Strategic Plan](#), constitutional objectives, the Ottawa Charter³ and Jakarta Declaration⁴. HCCA is committed to the following principles:

- a) **Achieving equity in health:** HCCA is committed to providing support, information and advice to reduce differences in health status to enable all people in the ACT and region to have equal opportunities to develop and maintain their health and wellbeing.
- b) **Advocacy:** HCCA advocates to ensure that economic, social, cultural, environmental, political and biological factors are advantageous for improved health outcomes for all members of our communities. HCCA contributes to positive changes to legislation, policies, service delivery, infrastructure, community behavior and attitudes in all levels of government.

³ World Health Organization (1986), *Ottawa charter for health promotion*, 1st International conference on health promotion: The move towards a new public health, Ottawa, accessed February 2022 <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/ottawa-charter-for-health-promotion>

⁴ World Health Organization (1997), *Jakarta declaration on leading health promotion into the 21st century*, 4th International conference on health promotion: New players for a new era – leading health promotion into the 21st century, accessed February 2022, <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-HPR-HEP-4|CHP-BR-97.4>

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- c) **Capacity building:** HCCA provides consumers with relevant health information, developing sustainable skills and resources to enhance their capacity to participate in community life to their fullest.
 - d) **Consumer empowerment:** HCCA supports consumers to be in control of their own health by having the knowledge, skills and confidence to make decisions affecting their health and wellbeing.
 - e) **Responsive and inclusive health services:** HCCA participates in policy development, service planning and evaluation of services to ensure that health services are sensitive and respectful of the cultural needs of our communities.
 - f) **Collaboration:** HCCA works collaboratively with our members, the general public, other health consumer representative and advocacy organisations, ACT Government, private health institutions, social and health care professionals and policy makers to ensure that health consumer needs and expectations are included in the provision of services in communities.
 - g) **Community Readiness:** HCCA is aware that there are different levels of understanding of health issues in our communities due to different cultural backgrounds, levels of education and abilities. Developing strategies, resources and techniques appropriate to a community's level of readiness is essential for success.

3. Community Development Strategies

HCCA contributes to identifying and responding to community health needs in the ACT and region. HCCA fosters community development and health promotion through the following strategies:

- a) **Develop an understanding of consumer experiences,** views, and priorities by consulting with consumers.
- b) **Empower consumers and communities** to act on health matters through information, training, education, resources and capacity building.
- c) **Support consumers and communities** to participate in activities to improve the accessibility and quality of health care.
- d) **Advocate for change in health services** informed by the needs of communities.
- e) **Provide a means for health care consumers to participate** in local and national policy, planning and service decisions through the provision of training, information, advocacy and consumer participation opportunities.
- f) **Identify and reduce barriers to consumer participation** in health service improvement, design, development and governance. Work to create

inclusive, accessible, and culturally safe opportunities for consumer engagement, particularly diverse and marginalised community groups.

- g) **Train consumers** to represent consumer perspectives and advocate for change in response to consumer needs and priorities.
- h) **Foster strong connections and partnerships** between consumers, health services, and community organisations to support coordinated action.
- i) **Work within a health promotion framework**, informed by the principles of the social determinants of health and social justice.
- j) **Support community led ideas and initiatives.**
- k) **Advocate for healthy environments**, access to education, housing, services and transport as these factors are essential for good health and wellbeing.
- l) **Reduce health inequities** by increasing the health literacy of all groups, particularly disadvantaged groups in our communities.
- m) **Advocate for consumer centred health services** which are designed and delivered based on consumers' preferences, values and needs.
- n) **Contribute to a culturally responsive health care system** for all communities.
- o) **Advocate on areas of community need** through ongoing consumer consultation which seeks to understand the views, priorities and goals of our diverse community.
- p) **Empower communities to improve their own health and wellbeing** through shared learning, a responsive health literacy program and community focused accessible education.
- q) **Strengthen community participation** by supporting consumers to actively participate and contribute to health decision-making through planning, policy development, research, advocacy, and committee representation.
- r) **Promoting a person-centred and culturally safe health system** by advocating for care that reflects the values, preferences, and needs of our communities.

Related HCCA Documents and Policies

1. [Health Promotion Framework](#)
2. [Consumer and Community Participation Framework](#)
3. [Health Literacy Position Statement](#)
4. [Co-Design Position Statement](#)