



9.2 Health Promotion Framework for the Health Care Consumers' Association of the ACT Incorporated

A. Purpose

1. This Framework outlines the Health Care Consumers' Association's (HCCA) approach to health promotion. HCCA works to empower consumers to:
 - a) understand and have control of their health
 - b) work to influence the social determinants of health in our communities.
2. HCCA acknowledges that health is a fundamental human right and is the essential foundation of social and individual development. According to the World Health Organisation, health is a *"state of complete physical, social and mental well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity"*¹. HCCA works to promote good health and wellbeing. We do this by advocating for a health system that meets the diverse needs of consumers and that consumers are informed and empowered to manage their health effectively.
3. HCCA recognises that health promotion is a practical approach to achieving greater equity in health². HCCA advocates for health promotion based on the principles of the [Ottawa Charter](#), subsequent WHO Charters and guiding documents, and the [Jakarta Declaration](#).
4. HCCA's systemic advocacy work is essential to achieving a more efficient, accessible, equitable, consumer-centred and responsive healthcare system that achieves better health outcomes for consumers and communities.

B. Health Promotion as a core value for HCCA

5. The Ottawa Charter defines Health Promotion as the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health³. This concept is a core value for HCCA and is reflected in our organisational vision of:

"A health system that supports consumers to be active in managing our health and delivers safe, high quality health care that meets the needs of individuals and communities".

6. Health promotion is most effective when consumers have good health literacy skills. For effective health promotion - health services, health providers, activities and support groups also need to have inclusive policies and practises that enable consumers to be empowered and informed about managing their own health⁴.
7. Health promotion is the process of improving the skills, knowledge and capacity of consumers to maintain their own health and address their healthcare needs. It is also advocating for the social, environmental and economic conditions which support good health across communities.
8. Equity in healthcare ensures all consumers, especially those who are disadvantaged, marginalised or vulnerable, have equal opportunity and resources to access high quality and accessible health care and to live healthy lives.

C. Key principles of health promotion at HCCA

8. **Advocacy:** The Ottawa Charter cites advocacy as one of the main prerequisites for improving health⁵. HCCA represents health consumers' perspectives in political, economic, social and cultural environments to advocate for change that will benefit the health and wellbeing of all.
9. HCCA was founded in 1978, which makes it the oldest consumer health advocacy organisation in Australia. Its continued strength and relevance reflects its effectiveness in advocating for the needs and priorities of health consumers and its ability to sustain productive partnerships over time.
10. **Equity in health:** HCCA is committed to achieving a political, economic, social and cultural environment in which all consumers have equal access to health care and equal opportunities to live a healthy lifestyle. HCCA achieves this through systemic advocacy, supporting consumers, representing their views and making health information accessible and easy to understand.
11. **Consumer empowerment supporting participation:** HCCA believes that all consumers need the skills and confidence to participate in decisions which affect their health and wellbeing at both an individual and systemic level. HCCA supports consumers to develop an understanding of how the health system works by providing:
 - a) accessible, health literate resources, training and presentations
 - b) opportunities and support to participate in policy development and decision-making processes affecting the health and wellbeing of their communities.
12. **Consumer-centred care:** HCCA works closely with different parts of the healthcare system to advocate for a consumer-centred approach that is respectful and

responsive to individual patient preferences, needs and values. Consumer-centred care means ensuring that patients' values and choices guide all clinical decisions⁶.

13. **Evidence-based policy practice:** HCCA recognises the importance of both qualitative and quantitative data to guide policy and service delivery in health care. HCCA uses research data, based on consumers' experiences, to provide an independent and informed voice for consumers on local and national health issues.
14. **Collaboration and sustainability:** Collaboration between individuals and organisations within and external to the healthcare system is an essential component of effective health promotion. HCCA continues to develop strong partnerships with key stakeholders within local communities, including consumers, Government officials, health care professionals, policy makers and minority and marginalised groups.

D. Health promotion in action at HCCA

15. HCCA's activities are informed by the five key areas of action in the Ottawa Charter and the principles of the Jakarta Declaration. They aim to achieve an integrated approach to health promotion to achieve better health outcomes and wellbeing for all consumers and communities.
16. HCCA's health promotion activities include:
 - a) promoting healthy public policy
 - b) health education training and resources
 - c) health literacy training for consumers and health providers
 - d) providing health literacy and environmental health literacy advice to health providers
 - e) developing and promoting accessible, health literate resources for consumers
 - f) community development
 - g) community consultation and engagement
 - h) supporting consumer participation in the design and delivery of accessible and equitable health services
 - i) systemic advocacy.

Building Healthy Public Policy

17. HCCA collaborates with communities and across all levels of the government to influence public policy to better meet the health needs of consumers. Incorporating

health promotion principles in all policies will lead to an environment which enables people to make better health choices.

18. HCCA advocates for a better health system for all consumers. HCCA works directly with a diverse range of consumers to gather and represent the broadest possible perspective. This enables HCCA to advocate on issues relevant to all consumers and to influence policy and program initiatives to better respond to the needs of different communities.

19. HCCA works to achieve systemic change through:

- a) Recruiting, training and supporting consumer representatives to participate on boards, clinical governance committees, advisory groups, clinical networks, forums and community consultations to ensure the consumer voice is heard in policy development, planning and service decisions affecting consumers' health and wellbeing
- b) Making submissions to strategic health policy and health reviews to encourage integrated and consumer-centred services to foster better health outcomes and wellbeing for all consumers
- c) Collaborating with other consumer groups and stakeholders to increase awareness of social and environmental factors such as housing, education, transport and cultural awareness
- d) Providing strategic, high-level advice to Government on consumers' perspectives on challenging health issues, including integrated care, transitions of care across care settings, the accessibility of services, chronic conditions and the prevention and control of diseases.

20. **Informing policy through research:** HCCA conducts regular research on consumer experiences of health care. HCCA also participates in and promotes research undertaken by universities, research institutions, community groups, government and service providers. HCCA uses this research to advocate for positive changes to the health system, including equity in healthcare, and improving the quality, safety, effectiveness and appropriateness of health services.

Creating supportive environments

21. HCCA recognises that the health system operates within a larger complex of systems and environments which are interrelated and influence each other and the health of individuals and communities.

22. We advocate for consumer interests in the design of health infrastructure and for effective consumer and community participation in health service planning. HCCA's vision is that all health and community buildings are designed to facilitate consumer-centred care, are accessible for all, and are sensitive to, and respectful of, the cultural needs of our communities.
23. We advocate for and work to ensure environments that are supportive of everyone's health and are particularly keen to develop and participate in projects that increase public awareness and change community attitudes to certain issues, including but not limited to obesity, cancer, smoking, chronic diseases and aged care services.
24. HCCA promotes self advocacy and supports its members and the wider community to take a proactive approach to their own health. This support is provided through training, consumer focused resources, information in our fortnightly newsletter, providing opportunities for consumer participation, and community forums. Information is also disseminated via social media and email networks.
25. HCCA believes that providing health information empowers consumers and enables them to increase their health literacy and ability to manage their own health.

Strengthening community action

26. HCCA is committed to creating a system which supports consumers to participate in ways that improve the health system and its ability to meet the needs of all consumers throughout the different stages of their lives.
27. **Providing training on individual advocacy skills:** HCCA provides free training to consumers to build effective advocacy skills, increase their knowledge about advocacy strategies, develop advocacy action plans and effective communication strategies. This supports them to influence change.
28. The aim of this advocacy training is to give participants the tools to influence the determinants of health, raise awareness and change attitudes, policy, and services and empower health consumers to be in control of their own health and promote change. This is also a platform for sharing information and influencing community attitudes to drive policy shifts that benefit the wellbeing of all people in our communities.
29. **Capacity building activities:** HCCA works with communities currently or at risk of experiencing disadvantage, such as people from multicultural backgrounds, older people and people with limited health literacy skills, to build their skills, knowledge and confidence to access and navigate the health system.

30. The aim is to increase the ability of health consumers to participate in decision making processes that affect their own health, as well as health service delivery and broader health policy, planning and evaluation initiatives. This increases consumers' ownership of their health and enhances wellbeing and social connectedness.
31. **Collaboration:** HCCA actively works to build networks between individuals and groups to enhance collaboration, the sharing of information and support for people navigating the health system.
32. HCCA builds and participates in networks with service providers, policy makers and consumers, not only in the health sector but across sectors and systems. We collaborate in order to share information, set priorities, make decisions, and plan and implement strategies in a coordinated and strong manner.
33. When advocating for specific issues, HCCA works collaboratively with other community organisations to strengthen action. This ensures that HCCA works with the community from the 'bottom up' to inform our advocacy agenda and to achieve progress through the sharing of experiences, skills and resources⁷.

Developing personal skills

34. **Health literacy for all in our community:** HCCA is committed to increasing health literacy in our communities. HCCA works to enable individuals to develop the skills they need to engage with health services in their personal lives and also as consumer representatives.
35. Health literacy is critical to consumer empowerment as it increases people's access to health information and their capacity to use it effectively and maintain good health⁸. The health literacy level of many Australians is low, not permitting them to access, interpret, communicate and use health information. This can affect their access to effective health care and health improvement activities.
36. As a health promotion charity, HCCA:
 - a) supports the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC) definition of health literacy
 - b) acknowledges that some health consumers need support to attain the skills and confidence to improve their health literacy
 - c) is committed to becoming a health literate organisation.
37. HCCA's Position Statement on Health Literacy guides our work on improving health literacy for health consumers in the ACT region and nationally.
38. HCCA's health literacy program aims to build the health literacy of all health consumers, particularly disadvantaged and marginalised health consumers, enabling

them to build the skills and knowledge to choose and engage with appropriate health services for themselves and their families. HCCA aims to increase consumers' ability to identify their own needs and advocate for themselves and their family in health contexts.

39. **Training consumer representatives to be effective health advocates:** HCCA provides free consumer representatives training to consumers interested in advocating for a more equitable, appropriate and accessible health system. This training enables consumer representatives to provide a broad consumer perspective, and influence the planning, design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of health services to achieve better health and wellbeing for our communities.
40. HCCA consumer representatives can apply for sponsorship to attend health conferences and events, which results in those individuals and their networks gaining access to information which can positively influence their health.
41. HCCA currently has consumer representatives working on over 100 health service committees at local and national levels. This skilled and committed network of volunteer representatives enables consumers to influence the creation of environments that support good health and wellbeing and ensure that health care services are provided in a way that meets their needs.

Reorienting health services towards health promotion

42. HCCA is committed to a health system which, in addition to providing clinical care, prioritises health promotion.
43. **Advocacy on health promotion:** HCCA acts to ensure health promotion remains a core priority for ACT Government and the community generally, including a commitment to and investment in public policy initiatives, and the improvement of health promotion infrastructure⁹.
44. HCCA advocates for a focus on disease prevention and health promotion to promote a comprehensive approach to health and wellbeing. Embedding health promotion as a core element of health service design and delivery requires high level policy change. HCCA achieves this by:
 - a) HCCA's Consumer Representative Program places experienced and effective consumer representatives on high level committees in both local and national settings. This ensures that health promotion remains visible as a consumer priority and as a core feature to be incorporated into the overarching framework of all services.
 - b) HCCA's Policy and Advocacy team makes written submissions to government and government agencies on issues which affect health care consumers.

- c) Promoting co-design approaches to the design and delivery of health services, facilities and resources empowers consumers and ensures health services meet the diverse needs of consumers.
- d) Working in partnership with other peak bodies and national organisations to promote consumer participation and health promotion approaches in the design and development of health policy, services and resources.

Research supporting health promotion

- 45. HCCA conducts its own research and partners with universities and other research organisations to support the inclusion of consumers as active participants in research projects, and to ensure the consumer perspective is reflected in research on health promotion, health service delivery, and patient experience.
- 46. HCCA works with universities and health service training organisations to include health promotion, co-design principles, and consumer-centred care in the curricula for educating and training all health professionals.

E. Relevant HCCA Policies

- 1. Community Development Policy
- 2. Health Literacy Position Statement
- 3. Consumer Centred Care Position Statement
- 4. Consumer Participation Framework
- 5. Climate Health and Wellbeing
- 6. Consumer Participation in Research Position Statement
- 7. Inclusive Health Care Position Statement

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