

MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday 24 April 2018

Plans unveiled for Tasmanian health consumer body

Tasmania will join the ranks of other Australian states by establishing a statewide organisation to champion the needs of local healthcare consumers, it was revealed today.

Design of the new state-based healthcare consumer organisation – which will enable the health system, healthcare providers and policy makers to partner with consumers – will begin immediately.

It comes after key stakeholder and community consultation to determine the need for such an organisation in Tasmania. This was followed by extensive work between Primary Health Tasmania, the Tasmanian Health Service and the Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services to reach agreement on the ongoing resourcing for consumer engagement across the health system.

Primary Health Tasmania CEO Phil Edmondson said the creation of the new organisation also kept pace with the changing role of the consumer in the healthcare sector.

“In the past, the consumer’s role has primarily been one of an advocate. Now, consumers are more active than ever in the pursuit of positive health outcomes,” he said.

“It just makes sense to provide a means to capture that energy in Tasmania and ensure it’s translated into genuine collaboration with healthcare providers and policy makers.”

Mr Edmondson said while there are some areas in Tasmania’s health system where coordinated consumer advice is available, there were also gaps that made it hard for organisations to access diverse consumer representation.

“Primary Health Tasmania is delighted to be working in partnership with the Tasmanian Health Service and Department of Health and Human Services to provide a statewide platform to represent local healthcare consumers,” he said.

The Consumers Health Forum of Australia (CHF) has agreed to auspice the initiative until the Tasmanian organisation is able to manage its own operations, and will be able to ensure the new body is well connected nationally.

“Health consumer organisations give strength to the voice of patients, represent the consumer view with government, hospital and community organisations, and provide training in consumer representation and engagement in policy and service development,” CHF CEO Leanne Wells said.

“Consumers are best placed to know what they, their families and their communities need.

“There is substantial evidence that we get far better health outcomes and experiences of care where consumers are properly engaged in decisions about the health services they receive.

“It’s also apt this announcement comes in Patient Experience Week, when we recognise the value that comes from acting on consumer experience to improve healthcare services.”

As a national consumer organisation, CHF brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise in both the evidence base for consumer-centred care and also experience of working with similar organisations across Australia.

The initial priorities are to:

- recruit a Tasmanian coordinator, with advertising for the position commencing shortly
- establish an implementation advisory group – comprising consumers and other stakeholders – to guide and advise on the new organisation
- convene a consumer and stakeholder workshop to provide further input into the design and planning of the new organisation.

This initiative is jointly funded by the Australian Government through Tasmania's Primary Health Network, Primary Health Tasmania, together with the State Government.

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To arrange media interviews, contact:

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NB: Phil Edmondson will be available for phone interviews before 9.30am and between 11am and 4pm

Consumers Health Forum

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NB: Leanne Wells is based in Canberra