

Policy Statement

Monash Health will ensure staff partner with consumers, carers and the community in health policy, planning, operations, care and treatment to deliver exceptional experience and optimal outcomes for the patient journey.

Purpose and Rationale

- To ensure effective consumer partnerships throughout Monash Health that supports consumers, carers and the community to improve quality, safety, experience and health outcomes.
- To ensure National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards (second edition) are met and exceeded

Scope

This policy applies to all Monash Health staff, contractors, volunteers and Consumer Advisors.

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1. Overview

Consumer, carer and community partnerships in health is an essential principle of health. It is a key enabling strategy in working with and meeting the health needs of our community. Research identifies that partnering with consumers, carers and the community is valued because it is:

- an aid to improve health outcomes and the quality of health care
- an important democratic right
- a mechanism to ensure accountability

Monash Health recognises that involving consumers, carers and community members at all levels of our operations (from the individual to the organisational level) is a prerequisite to ensuring we are providing optimal, effective and quality treatment and care to our community. To facilitate this Monash Health has established consumer partnerships as a fundamental component of our organisational culture and strategic processes.

National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards: Standard 2 *Partnering with Consumers* describes the systems and strategies to create a consumer centred health system by including consumers in the design, delivery and evaluation of quality health care. Monash Health views partnering with consumers as a key component of care delivery and planning; consumer, carer and community partnership processes ensure the interests of consumers are incorporated into the organisation's strategic objectives and improves the patient and staff experience.

Three key messages are used to focus, promote and support consumer partnerships at Monash Health:

1. Partnering with our patients, families, carers and consumers is essential in providing an exceptional experience and improving patient outcomes.
2. We encourage patients, families and carers to ask questions about their care, participate in care planning and treatment decisions.
3. Patients, families and carers are encouraged to speak up and provide feedback.

The key messages link to Monash Health Strategic Priority

1. We consistently provide safe, high quality and timely care
2. We provide experiences that exceed expectations

2. Monash Health Consumer Partnerships Framework

The aim of the Monash Health Consumer Partnerships Framework is to ensure that consumers are involved in the planning, design, implementation, measurement and evaluation of Monash Health services. Involvement of consumers, carers, and community members at all levels of operations (from the individual to the organisational level) is fundamental to ensuring that Monash Health's services are responsive to the needs of individuals and achieve the best possible outcomes.

The consumer partnerships framework, described in this document, provides the structure to embed participation and involvement of consumers into the organisation including governance, quality and safety and improvement processes.

All consumers have a right and are encouraged to participate in their care through shared decision making.

The consumer partnerships framework takes into account the needs of vulnerable or disadvantaged groups, and those with particular needs. Monash Health is committed to consumer partnerships that reflect the diversity of the community we serve through the active participation of consumer advisors that are representative of our diverse community.

3. Consumer Partnership in Service Planning

At Monash Health consumers are involved in the governance of our health service from the individual to the organisational level. Consumer partnerships occur at all levels of the organisation:

- Individual care – by consumers, carers and family being actively involved in their care and treatment and improving patient experience; and
- Organisational level – by consumers having input into service planning, design and operations at Monash Health

Engaging consumers, carers and the community in the design, delivery and evaluation of Monash Health services is an important aspect of good governance.

Individuals' Participation in their Health Care

Monash Health recognises:

- The need to support consumers to participate in their health care to achieve better quality, safety and health outcomes.
- That enhancement of care is facilitated through involving consumers in decision making about their own care.

Patient Experience: is at the heart of Monash Health's strategic intent: We are relentless in our pursuit of excellence and is a key priority as reflected in strategic priority 2. We provide experiences that exceed expectations.

At Monash Health patient experience is defined as "The sum of all interactions, shaped by an organisation's culture that influence patient perceptions across the continuum of care." (The Beryl Institute)

Patient experience describes the tailoring of care and services for individual patients that reflects the following principles.

- Access to care
- Respect for patient's values, preferences and expressed needs
- Coordination and integration of care
- Involvement of Family and friend
- Physical comfort
- Emotional support and alleviation of fear and anxiety
- Communication and education
- Continuity

Partnering with Consumers Committee: Monash Health has an established, strategic level Partnering with Consumers Committee. This Committee's work plan incorporates actions and initiatives that promote, support and embed patient experience and consumer partnerships in the organisation. The Partnering with Consumers Committee is the governance committee for National Standard 2: Partnering with Consumers.

Organisational Level Participation

Consumer, carers and the community make valuable contributions to Monash Health beyond participation in their own care. They can inform strategic and operational planning, provide input into quality and safety decisions and improve services and facility design. Consumer partnerships at an organisational level is supported through a range of functions including:

Community Advisory Committee: The Community Advisory Committee (CAC) reports to the Monash Health Board of Directors and provides input, advice and direction to support consumer, carer and community participation at the strategic level of the organisation.

Monash Health Patient Experience Plan: The Patient Experience Strategy and business plan focus on consistently exceeding our patients, family and carer expectation, by demonstrating courtesy, compassion and respect, while fostering a culture of accountability, transparency and collaboration.

Consumers on Committees: Monash Health represents its consumer partnership activity through the *Consumers on Committees* governance structure which provides the opportunity to readily influence culture change by involving consumers in strategic and operational committees and advisory groups. Progressing the consumers on committee's structure has resulted in an increase of consumer advisor membership on strategic organisational committees and operational program-level committees.

The benefits of the consumer on committees work have been three-fold; identifying consumer partnership gaps has provided an opportunity to embed consumers in areas previously not considered, identifying achievements that validate current activity and highlighting opportunities to frame future directions.

In identifying gaps in committee representation, a recruitment strategy has been developed to maximise the experience of consumers on committees, and involve those patient cohorts and

population groups that generally do not have a voice in improving their health services and health outcomes.

Health Literacy

Rapid population growth in the Monash Health catchment area includes newly arrived migrants, refugees and humanitarian entrants. This population group faces challenges of adapting to a new culture and language, which may be unfamiliar to them, often with few financial resources and little or no family support.

Monash Health recognises the importance of health literacy and its significance to the consumer, healthcare professional, healthcare organisation and health care system. We know that the combination of low levels of health knowledge and skills in the population, and increasing demands from a complex health system, have a significant impact on health and the safety and quality of health care.

The Partnering with Consumers Committee advocates for the application of health literacy principles to all forms of communication. The Committee's work incorporates actions around health literacy that acknowledge Monash Health's wide audience including people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people with disabilities, elderly people and adults with low literacy.

Health literacy focus areas include:

- patient/clinician communication,
- patient information,
- the physical environment supporting effective communication and navigation
- education and training to support health literacy.

The *Patient and Consumer Information: Development and Review* procedure, emphasises readability, Easy English concepts and promoting the use of consumers in the development of patient information and requires consumer review of information prior to approval being granted.

4. Consumer Partnership in Designing Care

Co-design

Co-design is a partnership between patients, family, carers, the community and the health service. Co-design is about sharing and understanding the experiences of patients, family, carers, the community and staff to design better services by doing the designing together.

At Monash Health co-design provides the opportunity for key stakeholders to:

- **identify** needs and expectations;
- **influence** how care and services are provided; and
- **inform** design and improvement.

Co-design embraces the following principles:

- Patients, family, carers, the community and staff have a right to influence how care and services are provided.
- Patient, family, carer, community and staff experiences are a valuable part of design and improvement;
- Design and improvement activities are enhanced by the involvement of patients, family, carers, the community and staff working in partnership.
- Patients, family, carers, the community and staff should be involved at all stages of a change (exploring, planning, developing, implementing and evaluating).
- Co-design is more than just asking people what they want.

Through co-design, guiding principles are developed which outline how the process will function overall and provide direction and key implementation strategies. This ensures that the consumer partnership process is implemented in a sustainable and supportive way and that consumers are provided with every opportunity to play an integral part in the improvement of existing and ongoing care for Monash Health and the broader community.

5. Consumer Partnership in Service Measurement and Evaluation

Partnering with consumers, carers and the community is an opportune way to have those who have experienced a health service in some form, to provide their insight and input directly into quality and safety decisions and quality improvement.

Monash Health provides consumers, carers and the community with quality and safety information that is meaningful, relevant and reflects our performance through a number of mechanisms including:

- annual Quality Account
- quality and safety metrics and performance indicator reports
- presentation of quality and safety metrics at meetings
- provision of information electronically via the Monash Health web site
- use of corporate and patient televisions;
- on-site information displays, including Welcome to Ward and Quality Boards

Monash Health promotes a culture of transparency and provides quality and safety performance information and data to both strategic (Community Advisory Committee, Partnering with Consumers Committee) and operational advisory groups and local level patient cohort advisory panels/ groups.

Consumer advisor membership on strategic level committees such as the National Standards committees (which provide governance for each of the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards) and operational level Program Quality and Safety Committees provides the opportunity for consumers to be actively involved in the analysis of quality and safety performance information and data at both the strategic and operational levels.

Monash Health has robust systems for collecting, reporting, and addressing consumer feedback. Complaints and compliments along with measures for patient satisfaction, patient experience, patient confidence and customer service are essential for measuring the success of the Monash Health patient experience strategy.

Through the *Consumers on Committees governance structure*, Monash Health actively supports consumers to be involved in decision making about quality and safety, participate in the evaluation of consumer feedback, provide advice on how we can improve quality and safety both practically and for long-term sustainability and participate in the planning and implementation of improvement activities.

6. Consumer Recruitment

As committees, projects or activities are identified that require consumer advisor involvement, a variety of direct and indirect recruitment methods are utilised to source consumer advisors.

Direct

- *Patient cohorts*: Staff are encouraged to talk to their patients, families and carers at a local level to identify consumers for committees, working groups, projects and improvement activities. These consumers are recruited onto the Consumer Advisor Register and are invited to be involved in ongoing activities.
- *Professional development*: There are a number of opportunities to involve consumer advisors in professional development activities. These can include interview panels for staff, review panels

and staff training/education sessions. Consumers can be recruited directly from patient cohorts or from the Consumer Advisor Register.

- *One-off activities or environmental scans:* For short-term projects or environmental improvement activities, staff invite patients, families and carers in for short-term one off consultations. These may be reported to the Manager, Consumer Partnerships who logs the activity in the Consumer Participation Project Register.
- *External stakeholders or organisations:* For committees, projects or activities with specialised or content specific areas, consumers or consumer consultants may be brought in to provide advice. There is a preference that consumer advisor activity involves those that have accessed or been a recipient of care from Monash Health.

Indirect

- *Emails:* All consumers on the Consumer Advisor Register are regularly updated on any activities, committees or opportunities that arise across Monash Health. State and National consumer partnership opportunities are also advised. This creates awareness of the importance of consumers being involved in health care decisions and also promotes the work of Monash Health more broadly to the community.
- *Posters and brochures:* Posters are created for recruitment of consumer advisors in waiting rooms, wards and other areas where patients, families and carers will see the advertisement. If consumer advisors are required for a specific purpose and area then targeted communications can be developed and displayed locally. i.e. maternity or paediatric consumers.
- *Internal advertising:* Consumer advisor opportunities are advertised more generally in internal digital advertising to create staff awareness of how consumers can be involved across the organisation. This is a restrictive methodology for recruiting external consumers, but provides staff with the opportunity to identify consumer advisors.

Monash Health maintains a register of consumer advisors. All consumer advisors recruited are required to complete a short application form, a confidentiality agreement, undertake a police check and hold a current Working with Children check and are logged on the Monash Health Consumer Advisor Register. A Consumer Participation Project and Committee Register is maintained and individual Consumer Advisor activity is recorded within the Consumer Advisors Better Impact record. Consumer advisors that are recruited to organisational committees (strategic and operational) are recorded on the Consumers on Committees organisational chart.

Upon appointment to a specific consumer advisor position the consumer participates in an information interview as relevant for the committee, working group, project or activity to familiarise the consumer with the role of the committee, the Chair and key contacts and the consumer's role and responsibilities.

The requirements for consumer, carer and community partnerships and ongoing recruitment process are outlined in the Consumer, Carer and Community Participation procedure.

7. Training

Monash Health Workforce

Monash Health conducts training for all staff and volunteers across the organisation, in patient experience and consumer partnerships

A Patient Experience Training and Education plan includes targeted training opportunities for new employees, face to face modules that can be tailored to specific teams, coaching for individual wards and clinicians, as well as a special session series with invited speakers open to all staff. The plan also acknowledges different learning needs for the broad range of employees at Monash Health.

The Monash Health Partnering with Consumers for Exceptional Patient Experience education introduces the principles of patient experience and consumer partnerships in the Monash Health context. This program has a focus on the key principles of patient experience, the value of consumer partnerships to

the organisation and consumers and putting consumer partnerships into practice. The program provides insights on what Monash Health is currently doing in this space, how staff can strengthen skills around communicating and partnering with our consumers, and ultimately how to provide a better experience for those accessing our services. Consumer partnerships training is offered through the organisational training calendar.

Training resources and materials on patient experience and consumer partnerships have been developed and are available to staff via the Monash Health intranet, regular updates and information.

Information about patient experience and consumer partnerships is provided at corporate induction for all new staff.

Ad hoc Partnering with Consumers at Monash Health training is conducted through ongoing professional development opportunities including staff meetings, in-services and face-to-face consultation.

Consumers

Consumer advisors are provided with orientation both to Monash Health and also the specific committees, working groups, projects or activities in which the consumer advisor is involved through an informal interview process.

All new consumer advisors are provided with a Monash Health Consumer Advisor Information Kit, which includes general information about consumer partnerships, roles and responsibilities, remuneration and frequently asked questions. All new members to the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) are provided with a committee-specific information kit.

Monash Health provides organisational information and supports consumers in their involvement at all levels of the organisation. We also provide the opportunity for experienced consumer advisors to mentor new consumers on an ongoing basis. For example, new Community Advisory Committee consumer members are paired with existing or long-standing members so that they can orientate and provide support through experience. Mentoring is an informal process and is provided on request or as needed.

Terms of reference and position descriptions are provided for all strategic committees and for operational and co-design/project groups where provision of support for consumer advisors or support of funding or development briefs is required.

Opportunities or invitations for external training, forums and workshops or conferences are distributed to consumer advisors and where appropriate, are resourced by Monash Health.

Monash Health utilises consumer advisors in the development and delivery of training and resources. A range of processes are employed including:

- consumer representation on committees, working groups or projects tasked with developing or reviewing training material and resources
- seeking consumer input into the development or review of training materials and resources
- using consumer feedback in the development of training materials and resources
- inviting consumers to attend and review training
- consumers involved in delivery of training
- presenting consumer experiences through consumer feedback
- presenting consumer experience through patient stories

8. Consumer Partnerships Accountabilities

Individual and shared accountabilities for consumer partnerships are documented in the Monash Health clinical governance framework. The clinical governance framework details shared executive level accountabilities and accountabilities of the:

- Board, Chief Executive and Executives
- Directors, Unit Heads and Managers
- Clinical/General Staff

The Patient Experience Office at Monash Health supports the implementation of this framework.

References.

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Health Services Act 1988 (section 239).

[Monash Health Clinical Governance Framework Background Document \(PROMPT\)](#)

[Safe Effective Patient Centred Care \(Strategic\) Policy \(PROMPT\)](#)

[Consumer Participation Procedure \(PROMPT\)](#)

[Patient and Consumer Information: Development & Review \(PROMPT\)](#)

[Cultural Diversity \(Operational\) Policy](#)

[Monash Health Strategic Plan 2013-2018](#)

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