Health Community Councils
Annual Report Highlights
2007-08

Working for our community
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On 9 July 2007, 36 Health Community Councils were established to provide a community perspective about the delivery of public sector health services in the local district. Councils do this through community engagement, considering and evaluating quality, safety and effectiveness reports and community education.

This highlights document draws upon information self-reported by Council Chairpersons which illustrates the overall operations of councils, key achievements against each of their core functions and examples of these achievements. The highlights are not intended to act as an in-depth assessment or independent evaluation of certain councils but rather a valuable starting point in understanding the work, challenges and future opportunities of this important health community engagement initiative.

Achievements

Operations
- 36 councils are established and operating
- A total of 253 council members have been appointed – an average of seven members per council
- Councils meet on average monthly and have met a total of 335 times in the year of operation
- Expenditure for year is $281,781
- Average expenditure is $7,827 per council

Community engagement
Undertake community engagement activities about the health of, or health care for, the community

In the council’s first year of operation, positive results have been achieved in the health engagement activity:
- All councils have undertaken community engagement activities and more than 190 activities undertaken to inform and consult with communities – an average of five activities per council
- 72% of councils have sought direct feedback about local health services
- 56% of councils have initiated activities to inform their communities about district health services and the role of councils
- 44% of councils have provided community representation or systemic advocacy around local health service planning and initiatives
- 39% of councils have used refined methods (focus groups, surveys, focus groups) to gather feedback

Monitoring quality, safety and effectiveness
Monitor the quality, safety and effectiveness of public sector health services delivered in the council’s district

- All councils consider and evaluate reports about the delivery of public sector health services
- More than 250 reports (including weekly and monthly reports) were considered and evaluated across all councils for example, reports around patient complaints and compliments, quality and patient safety, clinical incidents and Variable Life Adjusted Display System (VLADS) data.
- 63% of councils provide feedback or recommendations that influenced or informed the monitoring and reporting process
- 99 recommendations in total have been made regarding quality, safety and effectiveness
- Outcomes include:
  - operational improvements in health facilities such as introduction of a ‘self-administration program’ of medication for inpatients, use of ‘Medication Booklet’ for patients and improved food quality, restfulness of stays and cleaning services

Community education
Enhance community education about the delivery of public sector health services

- 91% of councils have undertaken community education activities
- 118 activities in total have been undertaken – an average of 3.2 activities per council
- 45% of councils have initiated general publicity
- 83% of councils have enhanced community understanding about councils, new or existing health services and increased public awareness of health care initiatives
- 47% of councils have organised and/or assisted with specific events

Councillors have the opportunity to inform and engage with their community and promote health care at a variety of local events across Queensland. This includes stalls and attendance at:
- Springsure and Emerald Shows
- Innisfail Health Expo
- Beaudesert Country and Horse Festival
- Diabetes Expo
- Gwydir Arthritis Support Group Morning Tea
- Roma, North Burnett, and Princess Alexandra HCC

Future outlook

Councils have fulfilled their statutory functions and undertaken activities with commitment and enthusiasm in their first year of operation. Overall, councils have established and facilitated important relationships throughout the community including district health staff, community groups, support organisations, media services and local governments. These relationships will support and drive councils’ goals and achievements over the next three years.

Some councils, within the same Health Service District, have commenced joint meetings to share knowledge, understanding and experiences about community health issues and health services within their area. This collaborative approach enables these councils to have a broader view and understanding of what is happening across the whole district and provides opportunities for collective solutions and sharing of resources.

Councils report a number of challenges facing them as they progress with their activities including:
- process improvements such as strategies to improve response rates of patient surveys
- staff training in ‘falls prevention and safety’
- patient education regarding the discharge process, better knowledge and record keeping of medications being taken by patients
- patient feedback as provision of transport for rural and remote patients on discharge
- increased coverage by Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme
- improved health facility parking conditions and availability

Gold Coast HCC undertakes a HCC Complaints Audit Report Process on a monthly basis. A designated council member randomly selects and reviews ten complaints and captures findings in a report which is circulated to the council, the Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operations Officer, District Executive Committee and the Patient Liaison team to assist with improving the handling of complaints.

Roma HCC provided feedback to the District Manager about the council’s perceptions that women were being referred away to give birth and that birth rates in the district are declining. Council requested that birthing numbers of previous years be made available for the council to assess, determine any trends and make recommendations back to the District Manager. Figures showed a steady number of births throughout the eastern sector of the district and with no dramatic decline. Council provided feedback to the community through various networking opportunities and links with other community groups about these trends and clarified community perceptions.

Gympie HCC initiated a local consumer rights awareness campaign jointly with the Health Quality and Complaints Commission through radio interviews and a media release. The local community and media were receptive.

Toors Strait HCC provided radio interviews to encourage community participation and cooperation, present educational updates and opportunities in regard to health service delivery and information about the council’s role and activities.

Tablelands HCC gave a WIN-TV interview to inform and enhance the community’s understanding of health services and strategies to manage chronic health issues.

Banana, Bayside, Bundaberg, Central West, Mackay, North Burnett, and Princess Alexandra Hospital HCC’s have developed and distributed brochures about their council to encourage contact with the public.