

Health Consumers

Queensland.... your voice in health

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The Hon Nicola Roxon
Minister for Health and Ageing
House of Representatives
PO Box 6022
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Ms Roxon

Re: HCQ Submission: A National Health and Hospitals Network for Australia's Future

Health Consumers Queensland (HCQ) aims to strengthen the consumer perspective in health policy development and system and service improvement at the state and national level. HCQ contributes to the continued reform of the Queensland health system, by providing the Deputy Premier and Minister for Health with information and advice from a consumer perspective and by supporting and promoting consumer engagement and advocacy.

In relation to the current national health reform agenda, HCQ has worked closely with Consumers Health Forum of Australia (CHF), the national peak consumer body, to ensure Australian consumers have a strong voice in the reform process.

HCQ comprises a 12-member Ministerial Consumer Advisory Committee and a Secretariat supported by the Office of the Director-General, Queensland Health. HCQ's *Strategic Plan 2008-10* focuses on the key priority areas of quality and safety; equitable access and targeted responses; and participation and engagement.

In principle, HCQ broadly supports the overall direction of the proposed reforms as detailed in the, *A National Health and Hospitals Network for Australia's Future* paper. HCQ would encourage the Commonwealth Government to press forward with its reform agenda for better health outcomes for Queenslanders and their fellow Australian citizens.

However, HCQ would ask that the Commonwealth Government provide further details about the proposed reforms in order to provide an informed, final opinion around a number of matters. Feedback to HCQ indicates that Queensland consumers want greater clarity and public transparency around the roles and responsibilities of the Commonwealth and State/Territory Governments in regard to the proposed National Health and Hospitals Network.

Given the continued involvement by both levels of government in the funding, governance, accountability and performance of key components of the proposed network under the current reform proposals, greater clarity and public transparency will contribute to public confidence that the proposed reforms will *end the blame game* between jurisdictions.

HCQ especially commends the Commonwealth Government on its commitment to 100 per cent funding of primary health care and aged care. We look forward to further details on these matters, particularly in relation to a number of equity groups currently experiencing poorer health, low

functional health literacy, and concerns about service access and satisfaction compared to the general community. These inequities need to be addressed and not exacerbated by the intended reforms. HCQ especially supports enhanced health advocacy opportunities, which align with improved health literacy and patient activation initiatives that promote wellness and resilience in individuals, families and communities; and reforms that promote safe and high quality health services and programs and other initiatives that achieve better health outcomes for consumers.

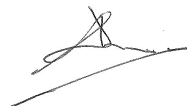
HCQ believes consumers should be central to all decisions that impact on their health care options and advocates for consumer involvement in health policy, planning and service delivery at local, state and national levels. We support the maintenance of a universal health care system where all citizens have access to the health care services they need, for the best possible opportunity for good health outcomes; reforms to the health and hospital system in Australia that deliver individualised, responsive, clinically and culturally competent health services, that are affordable, high quality and provided when, and where they are needed; and a continuum of health care, which provides a seamless transition from primary to acute care across individuals' life stages and social situations.

This submission complements other submissions around the national health reform agenda, which HCQ has previously provided to you. They include the September 2009 *Consumer Peak Bodies Position Paper on the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission Final Report – A Healthier Future for All Australians* and HCQ's individual responses to the interim and final reports of the National health and Hospitals Reform Commission.

HCQ looks forward to further details on the proposed reforms, particularly around rural and remote health initiatives, mental health, aged care and e-health. We are also keen to be involved in further consultations on upcoming national health reform initiatives which may impact on the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders. We believe it is vital that health consumers' perspectives are heard and woven into quality health decision-making.

Should you have any queries regarding this letter, please contact Paige Armstrong, Director, HCQ Secretariat on (07) 3234 1141.

Yours sincerely



MARK TUCKER-EVANS
Chairperson,
Ministerial Consumer Advisory Committee
Health Consumers Queensland
15 April 2010