

MEDIA RELEASE

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Council seeks better health outcomes through consumer participation

The Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service (DDHHS) held the first meeting of its new Consumer Council in Toowoomba recently.

The council consists of three independent members obtained through a public expression of interest process as well as one consumer representative from Southern Downs, Western Downs, South Burnett, Aged Care, Toowoomba and Mental Health.

DDHHS Chief Executive Dr Peter Gillies welcomed the members to their first meeting.

“Consumer engagement is really important and I in particular am really interested in the input of consumers into what we are doing in the DDHHS.

“In the past, the health system has been very paternalistic and all about “the doctor knows best” but we have moved away from that now to where consumer input should be part of everything that we do,” Dr Gillies said.

DDHHS Acting Executive Director Medical Services Dr Martin Byrne said the aim of the council was to provide leadership and oversight to consumer engagement activities throughout the DDHHS.

“Traditionally the public health system has been very insular. Now we are able to be much more open and transparent and we believe that people want to know what is going on.

“We too want to know how we can provide a better service and how we can work with the community to provide not just what patients need but also what patients want.

“We do a lot of testing on meeting targets and we have lots of numbers but we also want to make sure the other side is working well and that people are getting a good experience when they use our services.

“We are all consumers as some stage, whether that is directly as a patient, or indirectly as a family member or carer of someone who is using the health system.

“Each of the council members brings their own unique experiences and we want to hear their different voices and different perspectives.

“We think your voice is so important and we are really excited that you are all here,” Dr Byrne said.

The first meeting was an opportunity for the council members to meet each other, many for the first time, and to undertake some training and induction into their new role on the council.

The council will meet every two months, initially in Toowoomba but with the aim to begin holding meetings at other sites in the DDHHS as soon as possible.

The council will also conduct twice yearly consumer forums where community members will be invited to participate in discussions on topics including the provision of services and models of care or new initiatives being planned.

“We know that consumers and community members can make a valuable contribution to the health system and the consumer council is just one of the many ways the DDHHS is seeking to partner with the community to achieve better outcomes for patients,” Dr Byrne said.

Ends

Caption: (left to right) Council member Nick Ryan, DDHHS Chief Executive Dr Peter Gillies, council member Belinda Marriage, council member Cecilia Donohoe, DDHHS Board Member Marie Pietsch, DDHHS Acting Executive Director Medical Services Dr Martin Byrne, DDHHS Indigenous Cultural Capability Consultant Rica Lacey, and DDHHS Acting Consumer Engagement Officer Pauline Murphy at the inaugural meeting of the DDHHS Consumer Council in Toowoomba.

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