

11 June 2010

Ms Christine McDonald
Secretary
Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms McDonald

Responses to Questions on Notice

On Tuesday 8 June 2010, the Consumers Health Forum of Australia provided evidence to the Senate Finance and Administration Reference Committee Inquiry into the COAG Reforms relating to Health and Hospitals. Following our evidence, we have been asked to respond to written questions on notice. Our responses are provided below.

How is the Consumers Health Forum funded and what is the major source of funding?

CHF is funded through a mix of core funding through the Department of Health and Ageing's Community Sector Support Scheme (CSSS), and specific project funding. Membership fees provide an additional funding source. Our major source of funding is the Department of Health and Ageing.

What is the structure of your organisation?

CHF is incorporated under the Australian Capital Territory Associations Incorporations Act 1991. A Governing Committee of up to twelve members, elected every two years by voting members of the organisation, sets strategic policy directions for CHF. The Governing Committee appoints an Executive Director, who is the senior employee of CHF's Secretariat; this position is currently held by Ms Carol Bennett. The Secretariat manages the day-to-day operations of CHF including projects, policy and advocacy work and the Consumer Representatives Program.

CHF is a member based organisation, with five categories of membership: Voting Members, Organisational Members, Individual Members, Corporate Members and Honorary Life Members. Membership is open to any person or organisation interested in health and health consumer issues. Voting membership is reserved for organisations with a consumer base and similar vision to CHF. Membership applications are assessed by the Governing Committee.

Over 150 organisations are currently members of CHF, in addition to individual members. Our members range from local support groups to national advocacy bodies.

Further details about CHF's structure can be found in our Constitution, available at <http://www.chf.org.au/constitution.php>.

Do you receive any Commonwealth funding? If so, how much?

As noted above, our major source of funding is the Department of Health and Ageing.

Our CSSS funding for the 2009-10 Financial Year is \$374,555, exclusive of GST.

We also receive funding from the Department of Health and Ageing for specific projects. Funding levels vary depending on the timeframes and deliverables of the projects.

What level of consultation on the National Health and Hospital Network have you had with the Department of Health and Ageing? Over what timeframe has the consultation taken place?

CHF was not directly consulted by the Department of Health and Ageing prior to the announcement of the National Health and Hospitals Network. However, we provided submissions to a number of related consultations, including:

- Submission to the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission (August 2008)
- Submission to the Preventative Health Taskforce (January 2009)
- Submission on the National Primary Health Care Strategy Discussion Paper (February 2009)
- Submission on the NHHRC Interim Report: A healthier future for all Australians (March 2009).

CHF has also attended briefings on the National Health and Hospitals Network and the health reforms more broadly, including:

- Briefing on the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission Final Report (July 2009)
- Department of Health and Ageing stakeholder forum on the National Health and Hospitals Network (March 2010)
- Department of Health and Ageing stakeholder briefing on the National Health and Hospitals Network (May 2010)
- Department of Health and Ageing stakeholder briefing on primary health care reforms.

CHF has met regularly with the offices of the Hon Nicola Roxon MP, Minister for Health and Ageing, and the Hon Mark Butler MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Health.

CHF has also facilitated/co-hosted consumer forums on the National Health and Hospitals Network and the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission Final Report with the Minister and the Parliamentary Secretary.

CHF is currently meeting with various areas of the Department of Health and Ageing to discuss consumer involvement in the implementation of the National Health and Hospitals Network.

Further questions

During the hearing, CHF was asked to provide responses to two further questions on notice, relating to the level of consultation with the Department of Health and Ageing on the www.yourhealth.gov.au website and on GP super clinics.

CHF has no records of specific consultations with the Department of Health and Ageing relating to the www.yourhealth.gov.au website. However, we reviewed the website with interest, particularly the consumer stories and feedback.

In relation to GP Super Clinics, CHF was invited to participate in the first stage of the community consultation process for the GP Super Clinics Initiative in March 2008, and provided written comments. CHF also participated in other consultation processes relating to primary health care reform, as outlined above.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require more information in relation to any of the responses in this letter.

Yours sincerely

Carol Bennett
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR