

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

BUDGET ESTIMATES - 29 MAY 2012 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Topic: Consumer Consultative Group

Question reference number: HS 3

Senator: Fifield

Type of question: Hansard pages 61– 62

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 27 July 2012

Number of pages: 14

Question:

a) Mr Sandison: Basically, it is a mixed group of people who are advising the department about service delivery. They come from a range of stakeholder organisations. They meet three to four times a year and their primary focus is to talk about the delivery of the services the department undertakes and to provide advice to us about the nature of the services and feedback, either directly from their organisations or from some of their members. Examples of the organisations involved include the Australian Council of Social Service, the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations and the Welfare Rights Network. We can table a list of the membership, if you like.

Senator FIFIELD: If you could, that would be great, and also the terms of reference for the group.

b) Senator FIFIELD: If you could take on notice what the total meeting costs for the current financial year are.

Mr Sandison: The total costs for this year, yes.

Senator FIFIELD: And also, again, whether there are any daily meeting fees that members are entitled to.

Mr Sandison: Yes.

c) Senator FIFIELD: Would the minutes of the consultative group be available or something that could be tabled?

Mr Sandison: I will take that on notice.

Answer:

a) A list of the members of the Consumer Consultative Group is provided at **Attachment A**.

The terms of reference for the Consumer Consultative Group are provided at **Attachment B**. Please note the Consumer Consultative Group was established as a Medicare Australia consultative group prior to integration of the Department of Human Services. Therefore the terms of reference reflect the terminology current at that time.

- b) The total meeting costs for this financial year for the group was \$43,447, noting the last meeting of the Consumer Consultative Group was held jointly with the Service Delivery Advisory Group.

Consumer Consultative Group members are entitled to daily meeting fees. The fees are in accordance with terms of reference of the group and linked to rates set by the Remuneration Tribunal.

- c) The most recent finalised minutes, from the 7 December 2011 meeting of the group, are provided at **Attachment C**.

**Consumer Consultative Group
Membership June 2012**

Organisation	Representative
Department of Human Services	Chair: Mr Barry Sandison, Deputy Secretary Participation, Families and Older Australians.
Australian Federation of Disability Organisations	Ms Liz Evans
Carers Australia	Ms Susan Taylor
Consumers' Health Forum	Currently vacant
Chronic Illness Alliance of Australia	Dr Christine Walker
COTA (formerly known as the Council on the Ageing)	Ms Susan Stratigos
Families Australia	Ms Stella Conroy
Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia	Dr Sundram Sivamalai
Health Consumers Rural and Remote Australia	Ms Margaret Brown
Health Issues Centre	Mr Jon Evans
Department of Health and Ageing	Director, Medical Services Section

Consumer Consultative Group Terms of Reference

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Medicare Australia's Consumer Consultative Group (CCG) is the peak consumer consultation forum, where matters of a strategic nature affecting Medicare Australia and consumers are discussed. The CCG provides an opportunity for key consumer groups to engage with Medicare Australia on business priorities and programs at a strategic level.
- 1.2 The Terms of Reference (ToR) will take effect from 9 December 2010, from which date any prior ToR's are abolished.
- 1.3 Members will be required to adhere to the ToR's when participating or performing their duties for the CCG.
- 1.4 The CCG is to:
 - Provide strategic advice on key service delivery issues as they relate to Medicare Australia.
 - Provide input in the design of products and services.
 - Advise how Medicare Australia can add further value in the delivery of services to the Australian public.
 - Provide advice and feedback relating to implementation of Medicare Australia products, services and programs.
- 1.5 The CCG is not a decision making forum.

2. Interpretation

- 2.1 Medicare Australia: Medicare Australia is a Public Service Agency, under the Department of Human Services, established by the *Medicare Australia Act 1973*.
- 2.2 Consumer Consultative Group (CCG): The CCG is the peak consumer consultation forum, where matters of a strategic nature affecting Medicare Australia and consumers are discussed.
- 2.3 Member: Members of the CCG will be from consumer organisations that are key bodies in the public health and community sectors and represent Medicare Australia's major stakeholders. Where appropriate, individuals with specific expertise may be members of CCG.
- 2.4 Nominated Representative: The nominated representative is any individual attending meetings on behalf of a member organisation.
- 2.5 CCG Secretariat: Medicare Australia staff who are responsible for administrative support for the chairperson and members of the CCG.

3. Membership of the CCG

- 3.1 Membership will be drawn from a cross section of health and community organisations.
- 3.2 Organisations selected for membership will be invited to nominate a representative to attend the CCG and final nominations will be determined by Medicare Australia
- 3.3 Medicare Australia has the right to refuse a nomination under 3.2 and may seek an alternative nomination.
- 3.4 The number of members will be determined by Medicare Australia.
- 3.5 Medicare Australia's Deputy CEO, People and Operations will Chair the CCG.

4. Tenure of Members

- 4.1 Medicare Australia will review membership every two years.

- 4.2 In the event that an organisation's representative ceases attendance of the CCG, the member organisation must advise the CCG Secretariat in writing, of their replacement representative.
- 4.3 Members must advise the secretariat if they will be sending a proxy to the meeting.
- 4.4 Members who fail to attend more than two consecutive meetings will have their membership reviewed by Medicare Australia.

5. Member Obligations

- 5.1 Confidentiality Deed: Each member is required to sign a Confidentiality Deed that requires the member to undertake, to protect any personal, commercially sensitive and confidential information which they have access to and disclose any conflict of interest.

6. Reporting by Members

- 6.1 Nominated members are required to ensure that relevant information emanating from CCG meetings is circulated to their constituents. (Subject to appropriate classification and advice regarding distribution of documents).
- 6.2 Representatives will be required to seek advice from their constituents on issues as they arise.

7. Remuneration

- 7.1 Sitting fees will be paid to members after CCG attendance in accordance with the Remuneration Tribunal Rates as follows:
 - Attendance at a CCG meeting – full daily sitting fee payable;
 - Preparation time prior to the meeting for members who attend the meeting - half daily sitting fee payable;
 - Attendance at teleconferences and/or meetings that exceed three hours – - full daily sitting fee payable;
 - Attendance at teleconferences and/or meetings that are less than three hours duration - half daily sitting fee payable.
- 7.2 Other activity (that is not a teleconference or consultation) undertaken by members/nominated representatives between meetings will not normally be reimbursed unless by prior agreement with the Chair or the Secretariat.
- 7.3 All fees payable will be made to the member organisation. Payment can be made directly to a nominated representative if requested in writing by the member organisation.
- 7.4 For members who use their own vehicle, costs will be reimbursed subject to the provision of odometer readings.
- 7.5 Cab charge vouchers will be issued to CCG representatives for travel to/from CCG meetings upon request. Cab charge vouchers will be provided prior to meeting attendance. Receipts for used cab charge vouchers, issued by the taxi driver, and any unused cab charge vouchers must be returned to the CCG Secretariat prior to issuing of sitting fees.
- 7.6 Incidental expenses are reimbursed subject to the provision of receipts.
- 7.7 Sitting fees are GST inclusive. Ten per cent (10%) GST will be added to the fees and will be reflected in payment advices. The only exception is when the vendor (organisation) is exempt from GST.
- 7.8 Medicare Australia will meet the cost of air travel and accommodation for members attending meetings of the CCG.

8. Conduct of the Business of the CCG

- 8.1 A CCG meeting must have two-thirds of members present.
- 8.2 If the Chair is absent from a meeting or part of a meeting, he/she will nominate a deputy.
- 8.3 *Ad hoc* specialist groups will be convened as required.

- 8.4 All members will act in the best interest of the CCG.
- 8.6 All members will treat each other and visitors with courtesy and respect. If conflicts arise at meetings, these are to be resolved where possible by negotiation between members.
- 8.7 With the approval of the Chair, CCG members can request a person to attend a CCG meeting, to provide advice and information on a specific matter.
- 8.8 Any request for comment from the media in relation to the CCG and issues concerning Medicare Australia is to be referred to the Chair for referral to the most appropriate area and/or organisation for response.
- 8.9 Minutes and action items will be recorded and distributed in a timely way.

9. Frequency and location of meetings

- 9.1 The CCG will meet three times a year, reflecting Medicare Australia's business priorities and programs at a strategic level.
- 9.2 The venue for the CCG meeting will be determined by Medicare Australia, but will generally be in Canberra.

10. Medicare Australia support for CCG

- 10.1 Secretariat support provided by Medicare Australia will:
 - Prepare meeting agendas on the basis of information provided by internal and external members and confirmed by the Chair.
 - Take minutes and action items from the meeting and distribute to members.
 - Make travel and accommodation arrangements as required.
 - Act as a contact point for all queries regarding the CCG.
 - Prepare other correspondence as requested.

For release to members of the Consumer Consultative Group

Consumer Consultative Group

Wednesday 7 December 2011

Executive Conference Room, Reed St Building Tuggeranong

9.00am – 3.00pm

Department of Human Services

Mr Barry Sandison	Chair, Consumer Consultative Group
Ms Catherine Rule	General Manager, Service Strategy and Policy
Ms Tulip Chaudhury	National Manager, Service Delivery and Policy
Mr Doug Fawns	National Manager, Medicare and Veterans' Affairs Programs
Ms Bhavana Kaul	Business Manager, Service Delivery Policy
Mr William Garton	Service Zone Leader, Sydney

Presenters

Ms Nicole Pietrucha	National Manager, Co-design
Ms Alice Jones	National Manager, Older Australians
Ms Susan Cartwright	National Manager, Deduction and Confirmation Services

Peak Body Representatives

Dr Christine Walker	Chronic Illness Alliance Australia
Dr Sundram Sivamalai	Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA)
Ms Susan Stratigos	Council on the Ageing (COTA)
Ms Liz Evans	Australian Federation of Disability Organisations
Ms Eris Harrison	Families Australia

Apologies

Ms Mary Reid	Carers Australia
Ms Jenny Williams	Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA)
Ms Diane Walsh	Consumer's Health Forum
Ms Margaret Brown	Health Consumers Rural and Remote Australia

Proxies

Nil

Secretariat/Scribe

Ms Lucy Stephenson	CCG Secretariat
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Captioner

Ms Sellina Baker	Captioner
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1. Consumer Group

The Consumer Group met before the meeting and provided a report back in agenda item 4.

Consumer Consultative Group

The meeting of the full Consumer Consultative Group opened at 10:00am.

2. Acknowledgement of Country, introduction and apologies

Discussion covered:

Mr Barry Sandison chaired the meeting and notified the group that Ms Margaret Brown was a late apology due to flight delays and cancellations. Ms Diane Walsh was also a late apology and was unable to present the Report on the MBS Quality Framework, as scheduled for agenda item 8.

Ms Tulip Chaudhury was introduced as the new National Manager for Service Delivery Policy Branch.

3. Minutes and action items from last meeting

Discussion covered:

The minutes of the 24 August 2011 meeting were accepted noting the following requests:

- References to the report back from the Consumer Group (CG) should be to the Group as a whole and not any individual member of the Group.

Action items from previous meetings were noted and it was agreed that:

- **Action Items 240811:4.5** and **190411:5.1** to be merged as one action item as these action items are related and are being progressed as one.
- All other finalised items marked closed were accepted and to be removed from outstanding action items and placed on the closed items register.

ACTION ITEMS

- 071211:3.1** Minutes from Consumer Group report should be reflected as views of the Consumer Group as a whole, rather than any individual.
- 071211:3.2** Provide out of session status update regarding previous action item 190411:10.1 – Providing hearing loops in Medicare Offices.

4. Chair overview

Discussion covered:

Consumer Group Meeting Report

The Consumer Group (CG) met before the meeting and reported the following main points:

- The Consumer Group is concerned with efficiency dividend in the service delivery area, including cuts in staff training.
- There are arguments both for and against the possible merger with the Service Delivery Advisory Group (SDAG). Generally, the Consumer Group are reserved about combining with SDAG. Concerns and comments included:
 - increasing the size of the group and as a result, the possibility of losing the important elements such as the health focus and issues regarding health services;
 - logistically, combining SDAG and CCG may make it difficult for all voices from both committees to be heard. It may be very difficult to maintain equity among both groups;
 - some opportunities specifically arise from a small committee, rather than a large committee; and
 - views from a broader range of organisations would be a positive result of a merger.
- It was agreed for the next CCG meeting to be a combined meeting with SDAG. CCG is not being discontinued at this stage and the next meeting will be a trial.
- The Consumer Group understands that some people are able to print meeting papers, and that others are not. It was proposed, and agreed by the Chair, that where a member has difficulties in printing the papers, the Secretariat would assist.
- Eris Harrison noted that the next CCG meeting will be her last, as she is leaving Families Australia in June 2012.

Possible dates for 2012 CCG meetings

Two dates in April 2012 were proposed to the members for the next CCG meeting. These dates were Wednesday 11 April or Thursday 19 April. Both of these proposed dates were suitable with the members present. It was suggested that the members who were not present also be consulted about their availability.

The CCG Secretariat will contact the members before settling a date for the next CCG meeting and will advise members accordingly.

Future of engagement CCG and SDAG

As discussed in the Consumer Group report back, there are both arguments for and against the possible merger of CCG and SDAG. Members were assured that the merging of CCG and SDAG will not result in the duplication of effort and it will be a good opportunity to improve services and efficiency. The Department will also aim to

provide more out of session information, to increase engagement in between meetings, and to utilise the face-to-face meeting more effectively.

At the conclusion of the discussion, it was agreed that the next meeting will be a combined CCG and SDAG meeting. This will be a trial meeting and CCG will not be discontinued at this time.

ACTION ITEMS

- 071211:4.1** Next meeting to be a joint CCG and SDAG meeting.
- 071211:4.2** The two proposed dates for the next CCG meeting are suitable with members subject to advice from those members not present at the meeting. CCG Secretariat to confirm next meeting date to be either 11 or 19 April 2012 and advise members.
- 071211:4.3** CCG Secretariat to advise relevant training areas (Network Capability Branch and People Capability Branch) of advisory group members who can assist in the development of staff training on relevant topics.
- 071211:4.4** Provide an update at the next meeting on work underway on vulnerability.

5. Service Delivery for Older Australians

Discussion covered:

Ms Alice Jones presented an update on older Australians that included customer feedback and statistics on online registrations, age pension claimants and the ageing population.

Ms Susan Stratigos followed with a presentation on COTA research. The customer feedback collected by COTA is very supportive of the customer feedback Ms Jones discussed in her presentation.

Older Australians are not a minority disadvantaged group. They are a cross section of the Australian population. As such COTA was not advocating for additional rights, just more flexibility in the delivery of services.

The three key issues identified by older Australians are respect, access and information.

ACTION ITEMS

- 071211:5.1** Email the link to the *Caring for Older Australians* Productivity Commission report to CCG members out of session.
- 071211:5.2** Email copies of both presentations from agenda item 5 to CCG members out of session.
- 071211:5.3** Older Australians branch to consider improvements in service delivery, listed below:
 - Ensuring staff are prepared and trained for face-to-face interactions

- Consider provision of checklists to ensure people have all the evidence required for making a claim or other interactions with the department.

6. Update on Co-design

Discussion covered:

Ms Nicole Pietrucha presented an update on the co-design project. The co-design model and principles have now been endorsed by the DHS executive.

The co-design team is working across the organisation with key business areas to encourage the use of the new co-design techniques and principles. Co-design have also been working on a collaborative project with the Municipal Association of Victoria and have conducted community engagement processes to collect feedback on the issues that are important for some local populations. To seek customer feedback/participation, contact was made with customers at the local level.

An evaluation of this project is currently being conducted and is expected to be completed by February 2012.

ACTION ITEMS

071211:6:1 In February 2012, at the completion of the Co-design Victoria Community Engagement Project evaluation, Co-design to provide results/update to CCG members out of session.

7. Issues in service provision in rural and remote areas

Discussion covered:

Ms Cartwright delivered a presentation outlining service delivery strategies used by DHS in delivering services to remote and rural areas.

CCG noted the approaches used by the department.

8. Report on the Medicare Benefit Scheme (MBS) Quality Framework

This item was not presented as Ms Diane Walsh was unable to attend the meeting.

CCG members were provided with a hardcopy of Ms Walsh's presentation.

This agenda item was in response to action item 190411:12.2. Ms Walsh has requested the members and Secretariat note the information in the presentation and the action item to be closed as there is no value in rescheduling this agenda item for next year, due to the project being completed some time ago. The full report is available on the Consumers Health Forum (CHF) website.

9. Issues faced by younger people with multiple conditions

Discussion covered:

The aim of the Chronic Illness Alliance is to build a better focus in health policies and health services for people with chronic illness. People with multiple conditions are vulnerable and often unable to access the services required. DHS needs to be aware of this vulnerability group to ensure they can access services.

At a recent workshop attended by members with multiple condition, the top concerns identified were depression, stigma related to chronic illness, adverse events and the side effects of secondary treatments.

A main challenge is the difficulty of data collection and the lack of coordination between GPs and specialists.

People with multiple conditions are often financially distressed which is a very good indicator of vulnerability levels.

Mr Sandison asked members to consider the implications for DHS and its role in service delivery in future presentations from member organisations.

ACTION ITEMS

- 071211:9.1** Vulnerability Indicators, including identifiers, to be addressed as an action item at the next CCG meeting. (See 071211:4.4 also.)

10. Other business

Discussion covered:

- There are many Centrelink offices with no TTY phones. Previously, AFDO made a recommendation to increase the TTY phones but it was not clear to the Group if this has been progressed.
- The Batemans Bay Community Hub was noted. In response to the Group's enquiry if there are any more hubs planned for the future, it was noted that this is still a work in progress and at this stage there are no other hubs planned for the immediate future.

ACTION ITEMS

- 071211:10.1** Provide update regarding TTY phones. (See 071211:3.2 also.)
- 071211:10.2** DHS training areas to provide an update regarding how they incorporate feedback into staff training.
- 071211:10.3** Email website link to the DHS Organisation chart to CCG members out of session.

11. Agenda for next meeting and closing remarks

Discussion covered:

Discussions covered in the agenda item above, Other Business.

The meeting closed at 3:00pm.

Agenda item	Agenda action item no	Action item no	Action item
3	071211:3	1	Minutes from Consumer Group report should be reflected as views of the Consumer Group as a whole, rather than any individual.
	071211:3	2	Provide out of session status update regarding previous action item 190411:10.1 – Providing hearing loops in Medicare offices.
4	071211:4	1	Next meeting to be a joint CCG and SDAG meeting.
	071211:4	2	The two proposed dates for the next CCG meeting are suitable with members subject to advice from Margaret Brown. CCG Secretariat to confirm next meeting date to be either 11 or 19 April 2012 and advise members.
	071211:4	3	CCG Secretariat to advise relevant training areas (Network Capability Branch and People Capability Branch) of advisory group members who can assist in the development of staff training areas.
	071211:4	4	Provide an update at the next meeting on work underway on vulnerability.
5	071211:5	1	Email the link to the <i>Caring for Older Australians</i> Productivity Commission report to CCG members out of session.
	071211:5	2	Email copies of both presentations from agenda item 5 to CCG members out of session.
	071211:5	3	Older Australians branch to consider improvements in service delivery, listed below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Informed preparation for face-to-face interactions - Evidence for checklists in forms
6	071211:6	1	In February 2012, at the completion of the Co-design Victoria Community Engagement Project evaluation, Co-design to provide results/update to CCG members out of session.
9	071211:9	1	Vulnerability Indicators, including identifiers, to be addressed as an action item at the next CCG meeting. (See 071211:4.4 also.)
10	071211:10	1	Provide update regarding TTY phones. (see 071211:3.2 also.)
	071211:10	2	DHS training areas to provide an update regarding how they incorporate feedback into staff training.
	071211:10	3	Email website link to the DHS Organisation chart to CCG members out of session.