

**“So you want to be a
consumer on a
committee”**



March 2009

About Health Issue Centre



What do We Mean by Consumer ?

- Current users of health care services
- Previous users
- Potential users
- Family & Carers
- Individuals & groups



Definitions

- **Consumers** - use or potentially use health services; directly and indirectly affected
- **Carers** – family members, partners, siblings, children, friends who provide support
- **Community members** – group who share geographic location, community, particular interest and values



DHS Consumer Advisory Group,
Primary Care Partnerships, 2002



Consumer Participation

“The process of involving health consumers in decision-making about their own health care, health service planning, policy development, setting priorities and addressing quality issues in the delivery of health services.”

Consumer Focus Collaboration
Strategic Plan, 1998



You are part of a bigger picture

- *Doing it with us, not for us:
Participation in Your Health Service System DHS 2006*
- Legislation Health Services Act
- Evaluation and Quality Improvement Program (EQuIP 4) reporting
- Quality of Care report

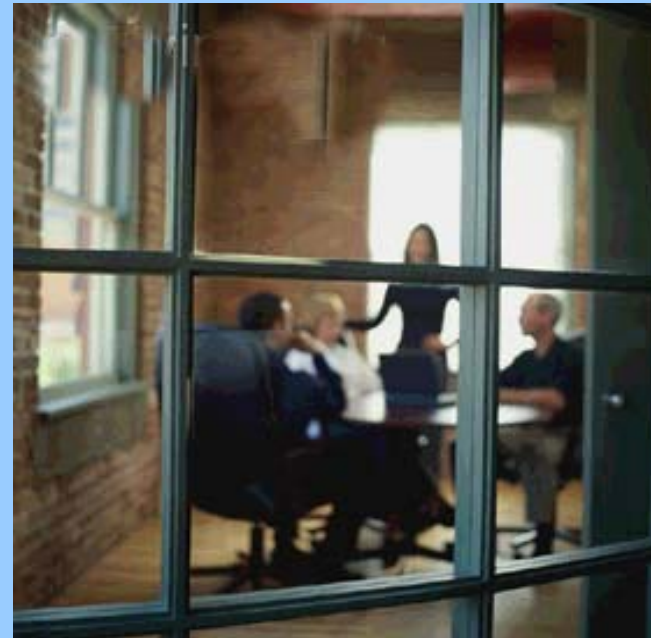


You can change things by:

- Being more involved in your own care and decision-making
- Providing feedback and making complaints
- Writing letters to services, decision-makers, media etc
- Joining a support or self-help group
- Joining a lobby/advocacy group
- Being a consumer member on a committee



So you want to be a consumer member on a committee.....



Types of committees



- Ongoing advisory group eg:
 - hospital Community Advisory Committee or
 - health advisory groups
- Ongoing technical committee eg
 - hospital quality improvement committee
 - Government committees or working groups
 - Federal and State

or the hospital Board



Is a committee for you?

- Can you think strategically
- Are you prepared to work with health professionals in a collaborative way
- Can you view an issue beyond your own personal view
- Are you able to consider a number of different points of view



Committees are about people working together



The Consumer Nominee Program

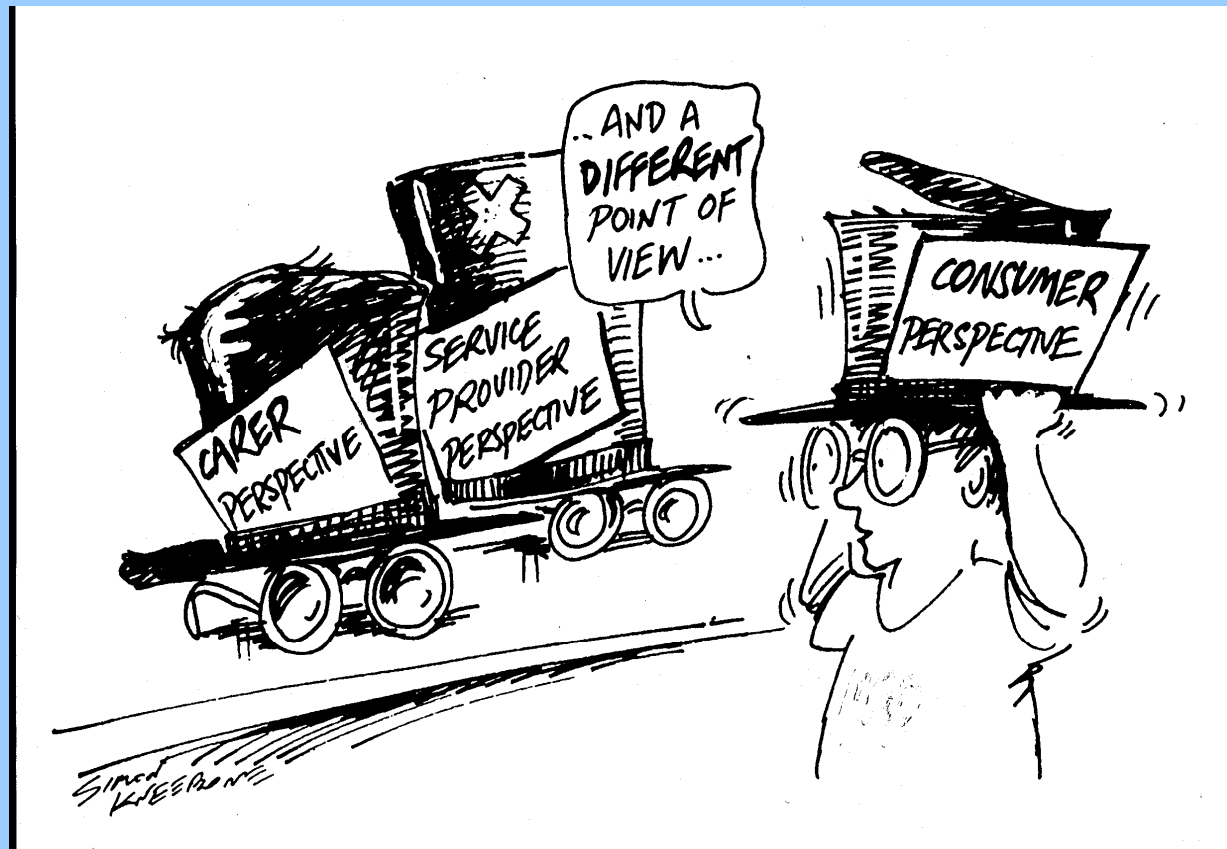


To find out more about HIC consumer nominee Program contact HIC on 9479 5827 or go to

www.healthissuescentre.org.au/participate



Discussion: *What do we mean by consumer perspective ?*



Simon Kneebone from *The Kit*, a guide to the advocacy we choose to do, p 228

Consumer Perspective – the ‘lived experience’

- Viewing health systems and services through a patient’s point of view
- Respect for the consumer frame of reference and consumer’s way of knowing
- Consumer perspective is about personal experience and it is also about getting together with others to achieve goals



Different perspectives include:

- **Representing views** of a particular organisation
- or of a particular population (eg older women or community)
- **Providing own views** as past user of service
- or as potential user
- or based on knowledge of condition (as diabetic)



Different consumer roles

- **Protecting** the interests of consumers
- Presenting how consumers **think and feel**
- Contributing consumer **experiences**
- Ensuring consumer **concerns recognised**
- **Reporting** committee activities to consumers
- Ensuring **accountability** to consumers
- Acting as **watchdog** on issues
- Providing **information** on issues affecting consumers



Consumer Representative



- Voices the consumer perspective and takes part in the decision making processes on behalf of consumers
- Usually nominated by and is accountable to an organisation of consumers

Preparation and clarification

- What do you know about the committee scope/purpose/authority?
- How will it operate (formally, informally)?
- Who else is on committee?
- Who do you represent?
- What are your obligations?
- What are your reasonable expectations?
- Setting some goals
- Talking to key people
- Reading key material



The role of a consumer member on a committee is to:

- Inform the committee how consumers may feel and think about a certain issue
- Ensure the committee recognises consumer concerns
- Ensure that the committee or organisation has a range of consumer engagement strategies in place
- Obtain feedback from you broader consumer network to inform the committee
- Work collaboratively with the committee



Reasonable expectations

- Being treated with respect
- Receiving enough information in timely way
- Being listened to
- Being able to ask for clarification
- Support to consult other groups where necessary
- Entitled to disagree
- Able to talk to others about committee in order to get support and information



Between Meetings

- Getting more info
- Talking with other members
- Talking with others
- Caucusing and lobbying
- Reporting to your organisation
- Keep in touch with Secretary
- Reflecting and evaluating



Useful actions at meetings

- Requesting amendments to minutes
- Asking questions - very powerful
- Using newness
- Recording dissent
- Taking notes
- Making your point
- Bring new information to table from variety of consumer perspectives



Some useful questions for your toolkit *(and a question is a very useful tool)*

- Do we know the needs or perspectives of all affected consumers are (including marginalised groups)?
- Is the new proposal safe and fair?
- What are the choices?
- What (or whose evidence is this based on?)
- Does it meet all relevant consumers' needs?
- What are training implications?
 - Thanks to Dell Horey and others



Some roles – *which ones are you wanting or being expected to play?*

- ask questions
- contribute consumer experience
- ensure consumer concerns recognised
- protect consumer interests
- gather consumer views
- present how consumers feel and think
- feedback to consumers / remain accountable to consumer or community group



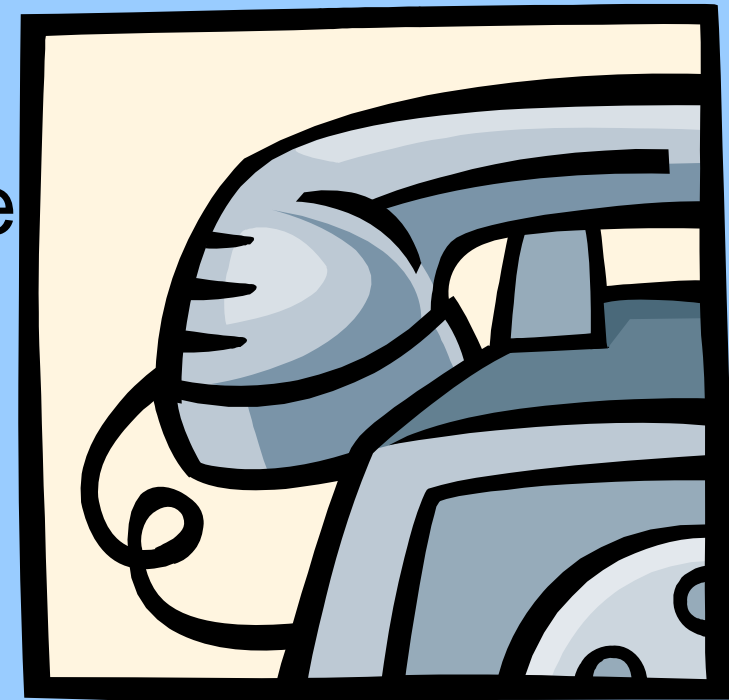
Skills to assist you

- Get to know your other committee members
- Try not to worry about saying the wrong thing but spend time preparing your questions
- Canvass ideas
- Be prepared write things down
- Remember you don't have to know all the answers
- Don't think you have to represent the whole community
- Give yourself time
- Find allies



Challenges

- Emailed documents
- Lack of acknowledgement
- Lack of clarity about their role
- Lack of support
- Unsure whether they are making a difference
- Questions of representation



Exercise – *what are your hopes and fears?*

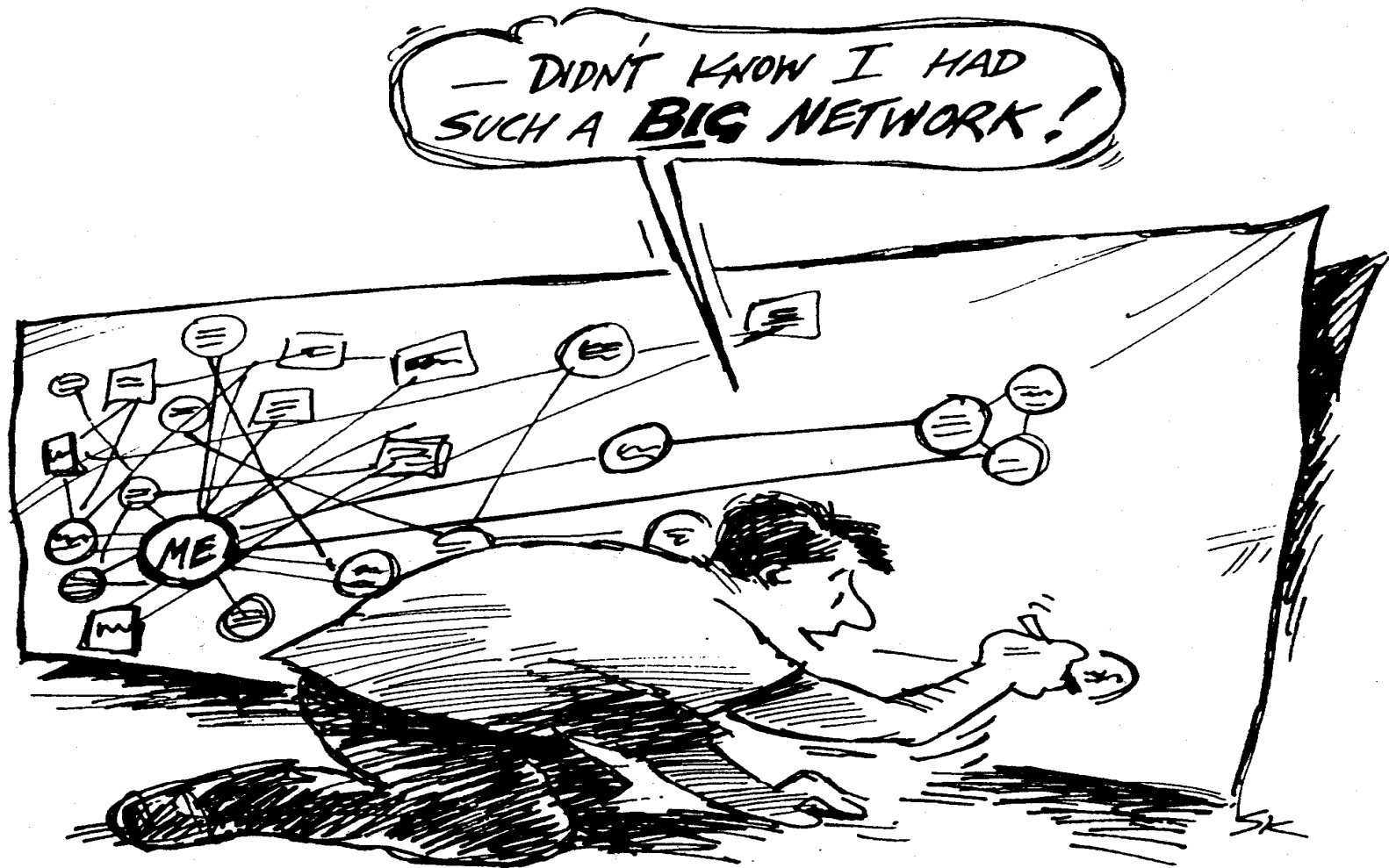


Activity

- *What strategies will you use to overcome challenges?*



Networking



Supports

- Other consumers
- Health Issues Centre
www.healthissuescentre.org.au
a.morrone@healthissuescentre.org.au
- Consumers Health Forum of Australia
www.chf.org.au

