



Statement of Priorities

ACT Election 2024

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Health Care Consumers' Association

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About HCCA

The **Health Care Consumers' Association (HCCA)** is a health promotion charity and the peak consumer advocacy organisation in the Canberra region. HCCA provides a voice for consumers on local health issues and provides opportunities for health care consumers to participate in all levels of health service planning, policy development and decision making.

HCCA involves consumers through:

- Consumer representation and consumer and community consultations;
- Training in health rights and navigating the health system;
- Community forums and information sessions about health services; and
- Research into consumer experience of human services.

This submission was prepared by HCCA staff based on feedback from HCCA members and the HCCA Health Policy and Research Advisory Committee.

Authorised by Linda Trompf, President, Health Care Consumers' Association of the ACT.

Executive Summary

HCCA works across all areas of our complex health system. HCCA advocates for safe and high-quality health care that is accessible and affordable for everyone. We are committed to exploring innovative ways to deliver care that meet consumers' needs and that optimise resource use across our health system.

The Statement of Priorities represents our areas of focus for the 2024 ACT Election. We ask political parties and independent candidates to consider and address these priorities.

The Statement of Priorities has been developed with the overarching philosophy that:

- decisions regarding health services for the people of the ACT and surrounding areas should be based on the best publicly available, evidence based, current information; and
- consumers and carers must be meaningfully involved in all facets of health service planning, design, development and delivery.

HCCA's consumer members were integrally involved in the development of these priorities.

We want the ACT Health System to:

- deliver timely, evidence-based care, consistent with best practice clinical standards and timeframes;
- employ a skilled, capable workforce that is well trained and supported;
- develop and maintain infrastructure that supports safe and efficient delivery of health care. This includes technology as well as buildings.
- undertake research that addresses community priorities to improve health outcomes and the quality and safety of health care;
- support consumers to actively manage our own health; and
- seek out and learn from consumer feedback.

To achieve this vision for the ACT Health System we must:

- ensure that co-design and consumer participation are core components of both system and service governance as well as program and policy development;

- connect the disparate elements that make up health care in the ACT – including public, private, and community-based services – and make it easier for consumer to access care across different services as our health needs change; and
- make appropriate and strategic investment to improve the efficiency of the system and the effectiveness of the care it provides.

Statement of Priorities

HCCA has identified priority actions under three domains:

1. Improving consumer access to specific support and health services;
2. Improving integration of care within the health system; and
3. Support for the community sector to meet demand for services.

All priority actions detailed here contribute to improved safety, quality and consumer experiences of health care in the ACT.

1. Improving consumer access to specific support and health services

1.1 Improving access to **outpatient health services** by:

- a. Proactive waiting list management and analysis including communication with consumers on the waiting list;
- b. Expanding Virtual Care options; and
- c. Increasing the number of appointments available to new patients as a proportion of the total number of appointments.

1.2 Improve the experience of **health care services for older people** by:

- d. Finalising implementation of a specific Emergency Department care pathway for older patients (otherwise known as geriatric streaming); and
- e. Expanding community-based services to help older people stay out of hospital, including the GRACE, RADAR and Hospital in the Home programs.

1.3 Increase accessibility and timeliness of **public dental services** to the ACT community, particularly for those members of our community more at risk of poorer health outcomes.

- 1.4 Support **individual advocacy** by funding a project to scope, pilot and evaluate a broad-eligibility consumer health advocacy service for the ACT to meet significant unmet community need.
- 1.5 Improve the delivery of palliative care services in the ACT by:
 - a. Introducing a 24-hour, 7-day telephone support service for consumers and families accessing palliative care.
 - b. Providing additional funds to support an increase in the number of palliative care volunteers.
- 1.6 Support timely access to sub-acute mental health services by investing in a range of community based mental health services and improving coordination between public mental health services, community run services and primary care
- 1.7 Continue investment in the Long-COVID-19 Clinic as a dedicated service providing integrated care for those with post-viral conditions.
- 1.8 Develop a strategic approach to implementing a Climate and Health Strategy that addresses decarbonising the health system and not only focussing on electrification.

2. Improving the connection of care within the health system to support consumers accessing multiple services.

- 2.1 Develop support services to assist ACT residents to efficiently and affordably access specialist health care interstate when that service is not available locally (or has particularly long waiting lists), including overhauling the IPTAS program to reduce the administrative burden and upfront costs to low income consumers.
- 2.2 Improve the Digital Health Record by:
 - a. Making changes so that consumers can make appointments for outpatient clinics.
 - b. Making all features on MyDHR fully accessible for phone and tablet.
- 2.3 Implement the Disability Health Strategy in the ACT to improve access to and experience of care for people with disabilities.
- 2.4 Improve communication with consumers and their families whose main language is other than English by:
 - a. Establishing a dedicated multicultural liaison unit in public health services to meet the cultural and practical needs of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) consumers.
 - b. Funding a scoping study, in consultation with CALD community organisations, for CALD community members in the ACT to become accredited translators and interpreters.

- c. Funding to increase capacity for the translation of health information into community languages. Introduce translation into languages other than English in MyDHR.
- 2.5 Expand access to 'no-exit' midwifery led continuity of care.
- 2.6 Develop and implement a Birthing on Country program co-designed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers.

3. Support for the community sector to meet demand for services

- 3.1 Redress the chronic shortage of affordable and fit for purpose community facilities for community and not-for-profit organisations.
- 3.2 Invest in a stable and appropriately resourced community sector by:
 - a. Implementing all recommendations from the [Counting the Costs Report](#) and commit to progressing issues identified in the Sector Sustainability Project currently underway.
 - b. Supplementing current indexation with an adjustment tied to population growth reflecting the associated increase in demand for community support.
 - c. Closing the funding gap that has developed since 2010, due to population growth without attendant increases to base funding.
 - d. Financially supporting community sector climate adaptation.