



Community Advisory Council communique

M3 / 2021

The Community Advisory Council (CAC) met online.

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and acknowledged the traditional custodians of the lands where members were located for the meeting and paid their respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

CEO update

Mr Fletcher provided an update on the work to strengthen the connection between the Community Reference Group and the Agency Management Committee (AManC). He said the AManC was a strong supporter of their work and had endorsed their 2021-22 workplan and the name change from Community Reference Group to Community Advisory Council (CAC), to better reflect the advisory nature of their role. He advised that the AManC did have some feedback on the proposed co-chair model in the revised terms of reference, which he understood would be discussed by the CAC as part of this meeting.

Mr Fletcher also provided an update on the Senate Inquiry into the administration of registration and notifications by the Ahpra and related entities under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law. He advised that 115 submissions had been received with 55 published on the Committee's website, and to date there had been two days of oral evidence. He stated that it was pleasing that professional bodies were generally supportive of the National Scheme and a national approach to health practitioner regulation. He said that there still seemed to be some confusion around how the scheme works and that the focus seemed primarily to be on notifications and that there was a need to continue to emphasise the totality of the scheme, especially the importance of public protection/public safety.

Revised terms of reference

Mr Lord said that the AManC was pleased to support the revised terms of reference in the main but had some questions about the proposition for a co-chair model (one chair a National Board community member and one chair a community member that is not on a member of a National Board). He advised that the AManC thought that the CAC was at a point of its evolution, where it was important that its independence be reflected and that this could be demonstrated by having a chair that is completely independent of the National Boards.

Members reflected on their decisions to recommend a co-chair model. They noted that they wanted to formalise the link between the CAC and community members on National Boards but that there may be another way to manage that.

Workshop and notifications update

Members discussed the letter to notifiers and agreed that a change to the structure and format of the letter might help with accessibility.

Mr Hardy provided an overview of recent work to improve the notifications process and specifically the work to help people with a complaint or concern get to the right place. He noted that there is a cohort of complaints that don't meet our threshold for a notification and would be better addressed elsewhere and sought the CAC's advise on how best to communicate that.

Revised regulatory principles

Ms Peck advised that the preliminary consultation on the revised regulatory principles had concluded and drew members attention to the proposed changes, in particular a change to principle 7 which sought to replace the language of 'deterrence' and 'equal weight' with more positive language of 'fairness and transparency', in line with the language in the National Law. She stated that next steps were for the revised principles to be considered by National Boards and then to the AManC for endorsement. If the revised principles were endorsed, the next focus would be on communicating the changes to our internal decision-makers and more broadly to the public. Members suggested a two-tiered approach to communicating with the public – a short, simple, summary up front and a more detailed overview for people and stakeholders who want more information.

Public register enhancements

Ms Griffiths provided an update on the public register enhancements project and advised that phase one of the improvements would go live on 28 July. She asked if members had had the opportunity to view the demonstration video and what they thought of the changes. Members stated that they were pleased with changes especially the inclusion of phonetic search and search by language.

Members suggested that in the next phase it would be good to consider additional refined searches, such as being able to search by LGBTIQ+.

Notifier Support Steering Committee

Ms Chivers updated the Group on the Notifier Support Steering Committee meeting and advised that the Committee now had two members with lived experience. She advised that recruitment for the social worker positions were under way and that the Committee was considering the eligibility criteria for access.

Consumer Health Complaints Reference Group

Ms Hall stated that the Group had held its first meeting and that the focus at this stage was on gathering data and hearing what consumers have to say. Some of the considerations included what the barriers and challenges are for people who don't make complaints and how we may be able to use data to identify who these people might be.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Strategy Group

Assoc. Prof Whop advised that there was currently an expression of interest open to National Board members to join a Culturally Safe Working Group which will inform how we embed cultural safety and eliminate racism in the notifications space. This group will be Chaired by Paramedicine Board Member, Ms Linda Renouf. The group will establish a cultural safety advice and provide guiding principles and resources.

She also noted the excellent work of the Program Management Team and advised that there is a sub-committee of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Strategy Group that reviews Ahpra and National Boards documents such as codes of conduct, guidelines and registration standards. This groups looks specifically at the language used from a cultural safety and anti-racism perspective.

Tasmanian health consumer focus groups

Ms Griggs provided an update on the stakeholder focus groups she'd been conducting with the Ahpra State Manager for Tasmania. She said the forums were a good reminder about the varying levels of literacy – health as well as technology literacy – across the community, and that this should be a consideration when designing consumer outreach.

Mark Bodycoat

Chair
Community Reference Group

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