Community Reference Group Communique

Q4 / 2020

The Community Reference Group met online.

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

The Chair advised the group that Ms Darlene Cox has resigned taking effect from 2 December 2020. Mr Bodycoat, on behalf of the group, thanked Ms Darlene Cox for her significant contribution to the group. Ms Cox thanked the group and reflected on her time with the CRG highlighting both the progress made and work still to be done in embedding the consumer voice in the National Scheme.

CEO Update

Mr Martin Fletcher provided a written and verbal update highlighting:

- office reopenings in NSW and Victoria and recent closure in South Australia in response to COVID-19 restrictions
- request for some National Boards to provide written submissions to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (the Commission), and
- planned follow up engagement with the Consumer Association of South Australia about concerns regarding notifications processes and outcomes.

Mr Fletcher responded to questions from members confirming that Ahpra is aware of the potential impacts on notifications arising from concerns about COVID-19 related delayed care and telehealth issues. Mr Fletcher commented these are issues currently common to international regulators.

A follow up briefing was proposed in response to a question about pathways for internationally qualified nurses clinically skilled in caring for patients with learning disabilities.

Co-design workshop CRG and Agency Management Committee

Following on from the September workshop at which the CRG looked at its future direction, members were advised that at its October meeting, the Agency Management Committee (AManC) agreed to a workshop with the CRG to investigate ways for the AManC to have a stronger connection with consumer engagement at Ahpra, including with the CRG and its work.

Members were invited to consider and agree on topics they wished to discuss with the Agency Management Committee at the workshop. Ms Susan Biggar led the group in its discussion, acknowledging the contributions provided out of session by members since their June meeting and the responses to a call for input prior to the meeting.

Topics members identified for discussion included how best community engagement might be undertaken with the National Scheme, what role the group should have to ensure the integrity of community voice, whether the community is currently effectively being heard, who in the community is the target for engagement for example the general population or more specific such as vulnerable communities, and how community engagement and the CRG could be best incorporated into governance.

Shared Code of conduct and user engagement strategy

National Director of Policy and Accreditation Ms Helen Townley outlined the recent progress with work on the shared Code of Conduct (code) and sought members feedback on the code and on the proposed user engagement strategy. Overall members commented very positively on the code and provided feedback on the best terminology used to describe patient versus consumer versus client. Members suggested a qualifying line in the definition of patient identifying that whichever term is used it is referring to users of health services, or future users of health services and requested that the term 'consumer' be included in the definition.

Ahpra National Register

Manager Strategic Policy Ms Rachel Griffiths explained to the group that Ahpra is exploring security solutions that respond to 'data scraping' of the National Register data and is seeking feedback from the group on an interim 'Captcha' solution and specifically if it would deter people from using the national register. Members noted that it may and suggested Ahpra provide alternatives so that people who might be deterred can still achieve their desired task, for example include a clear reference to the CST number so the public can call and ask for help searching the public register.

Mark Bodycoat

Chair
Community Reference Group