

Consumer and Community Engagement Strategy 2023-2026

Townsville
Hospital
and Health
Service



**Consumer and Community Engagement Strategy
2023-2026**

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Service).

For more information contact:
Planning and Strategy Unit
Townsville Hospital and Health Service
PO Box 670, Townsville, QLD 4810
THHS_Planning@health.qld.gov.au



This document has been tested with,
and approved by, consumers.

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional and Cultural Custodians
of the lands, waters and seas on which our health
facilities are placed. We pay our respects to Elders
past and present and recognise the role of current and
emerging leaders in shaping a better health system.

We acknowledge First Nations peoples in North
Queensland are both Aboriginal peoples and Torres
Strait Islander peoples, and support the cultural
knowledge, determination and commitment of
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in
caring for the health and wellbeing of First Nations
peoples for millennia.

Townsville Hospital and Health Service is committed to
honouring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’
unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land,
waters, and seas and their rich contribution to society.

Townsville Hospital and Health Service is proud to
recognise and celebrate the cultural diversity of our
communities and workforce at the following locations:

Location	Traditional Custodians
Townsville	Bindal (Birri Gubba) and Gurrumbilbarra Wulgurukaba
Palm Island	Manbarra Bwgcolman (historical)
Ayr/Home Hill	Juru (Birri Gubba) Bindal (Birri Gubba) - still to be determined
Charters Towers	Gudjal
Ingham	Nywaigi Warrgamay Bandjin
Cardwell	Girramay
Richmond	Wanamara / Woolgar Valley
Hughenden	Yerunthully

Foreword

We know that health outcomes are better, stronger, and safer when we involve consumers and community in the design, delivery, and evaluation of healthcare services and healthcare delivery. There is no one better to tell us whether a service or model of care is meeting patients' needs than the patients themselves. And there is no one better equipped to tell us what works for their community than the people who live, work, and raise families within its geographic boundaries.

We are proud to present the Townsville Hospital and Health Service Consumer and Community Engagement Strategy 2023-2026. This strategy is informed by extensive consultation with our community including local stakeholders, peak bodies, partner agencies, primary healthcare, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and First Nations peoples. It's informed by patients, families, consumers, and carers. Speaking to these individuals and groups, hearing their views, and understanding their perspectives has helped us understand when, where, and how our consumers and community want us to engage with them.

Our patients, families, and communities are sophisticated consumers of information, and they want, and expect, to be informed and consulted about the development and delivery of public healthcare in their region. They want to be involved in helping shape the services in their local hospitals and community health services, they want a seat at the table, and their voices heard. They want the ability to realise change and drive innovation.

And we want that, too.

Mature, evolved health services embrace the notion of consumer and community engagement and develop the pathways for this to happen in meaningful and authentic ways. Consumer engagement is everyone's business and everyone's accountability. Involving consumers in service co-design, embedding them in decision-making, and sharing how and where we engage, will be key to our reporting frameworks and operational planning.

We extend our appreciation to both the Consumer Advisory Council (CAC) and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Advisory Council (ATSICAC) for driving initiatives ranging from delivering renal services in rural areas to culturally safe and inclusive care. We also thank those consumers who sit on our committees and join our groups as advocates and experts and give us the benefit of their insight and unique lived experience.

This strategy is the blueprint for consumer and community engagement in our health service over the next three years. It's aspirational and inspirational and will enrich and enhance our growth as a health service that richly values its partnership with the most important stakeholder of all – you.



Tony Mooney AM

Chair

Townsville Hospital
and Health Board



Kieran Keyes

Health Service
Chief Executive

Townsville Hospital
and Health Service

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Ingham Community Advisory Network members meet



Effective engagement is about creating opportunities for consumers to participate in not just their own care but, in health service co-design, arts in health, capital projects, patient information creation, and community advocacy to meet the needs of those who matter most - our patients, consumers, and their families.



Consumer Advisory Council members Kaylee Boccalatte, Graham Lohmann and Chair Virginia Bendall-Harris

About us

The Townsville Hospital and Health Service is passionate about improving the health and lives of the North Queensland community. We strive to be a leader in healthcare, research, and education for regional Australia, and, as one of the region's largest employers, we are proud to be part of the community we serve.

Our people

Almost 7,000 people work for Townsville HHS, including:



5,217
Clinical staff



1,734
Support staff



69
Trades/technical staff

One in 19 working people in the region works for the Townsville HHS, making us part of the fabric of our community. We are beside you, living, working, and raising families, and the healthcare journey is one we are on together.

Our services

The Townsville HHS provides comprehensive public healthcare services, including primary and community care, oral health services, aged care, emergency care, and specialist hospital services.

Each day, across our 21 facilities:



336 people receive emergency care



356 people have a medical imaging exam



50 people have a surgical procedure



80 people have dental treatment



32 people have an endoscopy



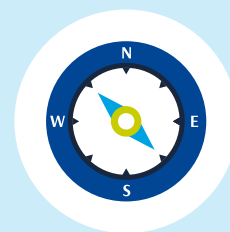
780 people stay overnight in hospital



1,810 people attend an outpatient appointment.

These services are integral to community health and wellbeing.

People seek out and depend on the Townsville HHS thousands of times a year, each hour, each day. How we engage with consumers and our community has a significant influence on the care we deliver and how and where we deliver it.



Our Vision

World-class healthcare for
northern Queensland



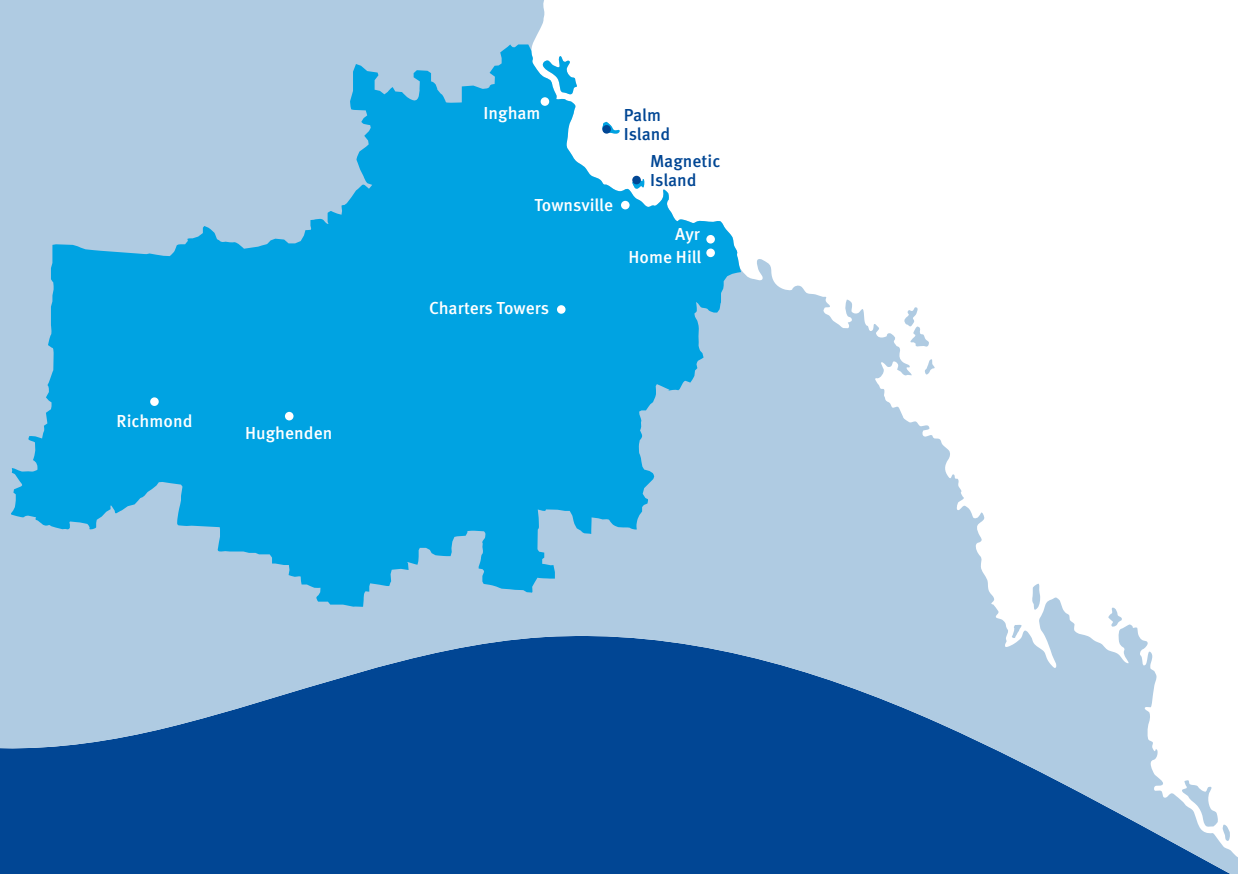
Our Purpose

Great care every day



Our Values

Integrity
Compassion
Accountability
Respect
Engagement



Who we serve

Townsville HHS serves several distinct communities, including Cardwell, Ingham, Palm Island, Charters Towers, Richmond, Hughenden, Ayr, Home Hill, Townsville, and Magnetic Island. These communities make up our local region.

As the major referral hospital for northern Queensland, Townsville University Hospital has a unique role in providing specialty services to our communities from Mackay in the south, north to the Torres Strait Islands, and west to the Northern Territory border. This broader catchment population is more than 700,000 people. As a result, many of our consumers travel from other communities to access our healthcare services.

Our consumers

Those who use our health services.

-  **80,000** individuals per year (88% local / 12% from other regions)
-  **14%** are under 18 years old
-  **33%** are over 65 years old
-  **30%** are First Nations people
-  **14%** were born outside Australia.

Our community

Those who live in our local region.

-  **243,270** people
-  **20%** are under 18 years old
-  **16%** are over 65 years old
-  **9%** are First Nations people
-  **13%** were born outside Australia
-  **8%** speak a language other than English at home
-  **23%** live in a rural location
-  **22%** are highly socioeconomically disadvantaged.

Consumer and community engagement

What is it?

Consumer and community engagement refers to how healthcare organisations interact with the people receiving services as well as those living within the surrounding community. It occurs in many forms at every level, every day.

Why is it important?

Consumer and community engagement is one of the bedrocks of quality healthcare.

Research shows that patient experience and health outcomes are improved when organisations effectively engage with consumers and communities. It also shows that health services are better, stronger, and safer when consumers are actively and authentically involved. This includes engaging consumers in co-designing services and models of care, and giving consumers a voice in organisational decision-making.

Communicating with consumers in a way that suits them, providing real opportunities to receive and act on feedback, and embedding consumers in hospital and health service business are key to delivering high-quality care.

Consumer and community engagement in this way directly contributes to the achievements of organisational objectives. It is for this reason reflected within the Strategic Plan of the Townsville Hospital Health Service and other supporting strategies, plans and protocols.

Instruments of engagement

Consumer and community engagement is required under several instruments:

Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights

Describes what consumers, or someone they care for, can expect when receiving health care. Rights include receiving clear information about services, the ability to provide feedback and have concerns addressed in a transparent and timely way, and to participate in service improvement.

National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards

Includes a specific standard regarding how health service organisations develop, implement, and maintain systems to partner with consumers in planning, design, delivery, measurement, and evaluation of services.

Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011

Requires each HHS to develop and publish a strategy to promote consultation with consumers and members of the community.

Levels of engagement

Engagement occurs at every level:

- individual
- service
- organisation
- system.

These are not mutually exclusive, and all are needed to achieve the best possible engagement outcomes.

Types of engagement

There are different types of engagement. These are identified on the spectrum below¹:

		Goal	Examples
LEVEL OF INFLUENCE	Inform	Provide information	Letters, social media updates
	Consult	Obtain feedback	Surveys, workshops
	Co-Design	Involve	Work with consumers Focus groups, committees
		Collaborate	Share decision-making with consumers Project groups, selection panels
		Empower	Place decisions in the hands of consumers Consumer-led projects

¹ International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)

How we engage

The Townsville HHS engages with consumers and the community in a wide variety of ways. These include information sharing, providing regular updates through the media and other communications channels, and using contemporary survey tools and feedback mechanisms to create opportunities for consultative and collaborative engagement that seeks to resolve complex problems and meet agreed outcomes.

The Townsville HHS engages with consumers and the community through:

COMMUNICATION PLATFORMS

Website information: we share information about our health service via our website including the latest in healthcare information, our services and staff, good news stories, and how you can provide feedback.

News via traditional and social media: we regularly update the community on trending health stories, public health information, and matters of public interest via print, broadcast and electronic (television) media, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter.

Online Consultation Hub: this online platform allows members of our community to provide targeted feedback from their home computer or smart device on subjects that include planning for the future of healthcare.

Brochures, posters, and fact sheets: we join with consumers to design and produce patient information that is engaging and consumable.

Letters and formal correspondence: we inform our patients through letters about their appointments or other important matters.

Digital communication via text and apps: we send our patients reminder texts, ask them to complete surveys, and manage their appointments via text messages and apps.

Face-to-face and virtual patient care: both in-person appointments and telehealth are core to our service delivery and are tailored to meet patient needs.

Patient Feedback Service: patients, visitors, and families have multi-platform options to formally provide patient feedback and receive a response and action.

Patient experience surveys: patient surveys help us evaluate the patient and consumer experience and inform continuous improvement.

CO-DESIGN

Community forums: we meet our community where they live or invite them to us to provide opportunities to hear about issues or concerns.

Co-design meetings: we ask our consumers to join us in the design of new services, buildings, spaces, and models of care by including them in our working parties and project control groups.

CONSUMER COUNCILS AND NETWORKS

Community Advisory Networks: our rural CANs represent the interests of their communities and advocate for healthcare in their regions.

Community Partner Program: we draw on our diverse community partners for specialised engagement on topics ranging from food to wayfinding.

Consumer representation on management committees: consumers with lived experience are key members of management committees and share their unique perspectives to inform and improve healthcare delivery.

Consumer representation in service planning and reviews: consumers are key to how we plan services and are relied upon to ensure a consumer voice in clinical and other reviews.

Consumer Advisory Council: the CAC, which includes CAN representatives, the Board Chair and Health Service Chief Executive, formally elevates the consumer voice and helps guide organisational decision-making.

Consumer representation on Board committees: consumers sit on key Board committees including Quality and Safety, Finance, and Stakeholder Engagement to ensure there is a consumer perspective and external expertise.

Mental Health Lived Experience Group: representing consumers with lived experience of mental illness, the group is a key advisory and advocacy group for the Mental Health Service Group and the Townsville HHS.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Sponsorship of community events: we sponsor community events, conferences, and sporting carnivals to support engagement with our community, promote health and wellbeing, and build trust in our brand.

Attendance at community forums, events: we are a visible presence at community events and expos to inform and engage with our community one on one.

FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES ENGAGEMENT

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Consumer Advisory Networks: linking to the ATSICAC, the networks share the lived experience of local First Nations people and help inform the ATSICAC agenda of partnership, equity, and advocacy.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Advisory Council: ATSICAC, which includes a Board representative and Health Service Chief Executive, is the HHS's peak First Nations consumer group supporting equity, cultural inclusion, and the agenda to Close the Gap in health outcomes for First Nations peoples.

Yarning circles with First Nations peoples: informal local gatherings of First Nations peoples enabling them to share experiences and speak their truths as consumers, carers, and families.

Two key consumer councils – the Consumer Advisory Council and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Advisory Council – have a direct reporting pathway to the Townsville Hospital and Health Board.

Key to the success of these councils is the ability to escalate local matters of community concern and to advocate on behalf of their consumer and representative stakeholders for equity, continuous improvement, and change. The councils assist the Townsville HHS to effectively engage with consumers and the community, providing a strong baseline to drive more and better engagement going forward.



Family engagement key to Babycam pilot success

The successful trial of a cot-based webcam that allows parents to live stream their babies 24/7 from Townsville University Hospital's neonatal unit has resulted in a plan to establish the innovation permanently.

Neonatologist and research lead Professor Yoga Kandasamy said the technology used an LED touch screen attached to the cot with USB ports that could transmit video, pictures, and text to families.

"It also has a real-time family image and messaging facilities so the care team can send updates to parents," he said.

Professor Kandasamy said parents were key to the success of the pilot.

"The establishment of the innovation was on a background of research that actively involved parents and families of babies in our unit," he said.

"The idea for Babycam was to keep families connected in real time but we firstly needed to understand that it met their needs.

"Key to our success was establishing that families wanted this level of communication and access and how and where they wanted it."

For mum Stella Wong, who delivered baby Astrid nine weeks early, the prospect of Babycam filled her with hope for other families.

"This technology will give families so much peace of mind," she said.

Consumer story inspiration for patient journal

A personal journey has inspired a creative solution to help patients and consumers navigate the healthcare system.

Townsville Hospital and Health Service Consumer Advisory Council member Kylie Doyle received a life-changing breast cancer diagnosis in 2015.

"Your head is just spinning with all the new information you are taking in," she said.

"When you first receive your diagnosis, you are not familiar with the hospital system and it feels like the doctors and nurses are speaking another language."

During her cancer journey, Kylie was given a journal to help her keep track of appointments, complex medication schedules, and to help her remember what the doctors had told her.

"It was such a gift to me, and I was able to transfer everything out of my head onto paper," she said.

Kylie took her story and the idea of a patient journal for all patients to the Consumer Advisory Council which took it up as a project.

The journals, which are free to patients, have been co-designed with consumers and staff to help empower patients to take control of their health.

"The journal includes sections on appointment tracking, expenses and important clinical contacts," Kylie said.

"Patients can use the journal to set their goals for recovery, understand what their diagnosis means for them, and list any questions they want to ask their healthcare team."



Two consumer groups partnered with Townsville University Hospital staff and architects to workshop the 'look and feel' of the new acute admission unit.

Nurse unit manager Kris Hughes said partnering with consumers meant all perspectives were considered.

"It gives everyone an opportunity to share their views, not only on what's appropriate but on what features need to be considered," she said.

"That way it's not just what the staff think, it's what our patients would like to see and feel while they're with us."

Consumer Randal Ross said it was important that the environment was inclusive and brought culture in.

"The art in the unit tells the story of community, of Magnetic Island, and what Townsville and North Queensland are all about.

"We wanted people to feel that this is home."

Randal said he believed consumer and community engagement was a powerhouse for good.

"In important areas like health, the more you include the community and help them to drive decisions, the more involved and engaged they feel."

The lightboxes, designed by Tamika Grant-Iramu, were inspired by the consumer-informed creative brief to explore the traditional owners' relationship with the unique ecology of the region.



Consumers help inspire hospital artworks

Former intensive care unit patients and families gathered for morning tea at Townsville University Hospital recently as part of a quality-improvement project to understand the patient experience.

Intensivist Dr Joanna Longley said she wanted to hear more about the patient experience.

"What surprised me was that the elements I thought would be the most challenging were not what the patients found the most difficult," she said.

"I thought having a tracheostomy would be uncomfortable, but one patient told me it was having his teeth cleaned that was the most painful thing," she said.

Dr Longley said she hoped to take the findings of the project to inform care in the unit and create a community of former intensive care patients to help shape continuous improvement.

"We are also creating patient boxes with jigsaw puzzles, books and craft supplies to give our patients who aren't asleep some stimulus in what can be a very confronting and medicalised environment," she said.

"We are also introducing therapy dogs and volunteers from Brighter Lives to provide companionship for our patients."

Consumers share intensive care experience





Health infrastructure which is co-designed with the people who will use it is fundamentally better, and research backs this up.



Stuart Garantzotis, Executive Director
Infrastructure Program Delivery

Looking forward

How we consulted

This strategy has been developed to guide consumer and community engagement for the next three years.

It has been directly informed by extensive consumer and community consultation, ensuring the many diverse voices within our communities were both heard and listened to, and will be acted upon to improve how we engage.

Our staff and independent subject matter experts were also consulted to ensure as many opportunities for engagement as possible were explored.



400+ community members consulted

Including:

- charities
- partner agencies
- First Nations Elders
- rural communities
- seniors' groups
- disability organisations
- refugee health network
- multicultural groups
- homelessness services
- youth groups
- members of parliament
- mayors and councillors
- other government agencies.



3 community surveys

(1,550 total responses)



50+ staff consulted

Including frontline clinicians, managers, senior leadership, and Board members



Independent expert advice

Included several recommendations on ways to improve

Consumer consultation via our online Consultation Hub is how our patients, consumers and families can give us their views using their home PCs and smart devices.



Health consumer representative Bree Lauro

What we heard



There are many examples of excellent consumer and community engagement, but also many opportunities for improvement



Engagement methods need to be tailored to reach certain groups, such as young people and First Nations peoples



Consumers should be involved earlier in the planning and improvement of services



Consumers want to know more about available services, wait times, and ways to improve their health



Most people trust the information they receive from their local hospital



Many consumers do not feel their feedback is acknowledged in a meaningful way or acted upon



Consumer engagement must be embedded as core business through leadership and performance reporting



The HHS could more effectively engage with hard-to-reach groups by engaging in partnership with community organisations



Most people do not know how to be involved in planning, designing, or improving local health services

Our goals

We will continue to exploit and enhance our existing engagement tactics and platforms, while focussing on three

improvement priorities guided by the needs and desires of our consumers and community.

Priorities



**Better
communication**



**Improved
consultation**



**More
co-design**

What we will engage about

We will engage our consumers and community about:

- opportunities for service improvement
- development of new services
- capital projects
- person-centred care initiatives
- culturally appropriate and safe care
- community health needs.

*The Townsville
HHS's Health Literacy
Group involves consumers
and staff in the development of
patient information including fact
sheets, brochures, website content,
and fliers.*

*The group's aim is to create
information that isn't complicated
by medical jargon and is easily
understood and consumed by
patients, consumers and
their families.*



Pharmacists Aaron Woods and Alecia Walker are on the committee to help guide instructions on medications.



Communicating with consumers in a way that suits them, providing real opportunities to receive and act on feedback, and embedding consumers in hospital and health service business are key to delivering high-quality care.



Staff at the First Nations Leadership Program, Integrating Two Worlds, are paving the way to improved engagement for First Nations peoples



1. Better communication

STRATEGIES

- 1.1** Ensure priority patient information is reviewed by consumers on the Health Literacy Group and/or applicable lived experience groups
- 1.2** Translate priority information into languages suitable for people from linguistically diverse backgrounds and First Nations peoples
- 1.3** Develop a social media strategy to respond to our audience's needs and preferences
- 1.4** Develop new approaches to mainstream media to align with a changing media landscape
- 1.5** Develop digital health promotions on the health topics aligned to local health needs
- 1.6** Leverage contemporary technology such as mobile applications to better and able consumers to be partners in their care
- 1.7** Develop and implement a framework for showing consumers how their input has been used
- 1.8** Monitor the quality and timeliness of communication to consumers before, during, and after their care

MEASURES

- website traffic
- social media reach and engagement
- number of good news stories published in print, online, broadcast, electronic and video news releases
- number and distribution of documents translated to languages other than English
- number of patient-focussed publications reviewed by the Health Literacy Group
- number of patient compliments and complaints relating to communication
- percentage of patient complaints resolved within 35 calendar days



2. Improved consultation

STRATEGIES

- 2.1** Increase patient feedback through a multifaceted approach including QR codes, surveys, and promotions
- 2.2** Promote and regularly use the online Consultation Hub as way to gather consumer and community ideas
- 2.3** Develop a robust framework for systematically analysing, reporting, and using consumer feedback trends
- 2.4** Develop a community partner/agency register to guide targeted and ongoing consultation with hard-to-reach groups
- 2.5** Create a lived experience consumer register which can be utilised by service groups, divisions and disciplines to drive meaningful consultation and ensuring diversity of consumers
- 2.6** Embed a rolling program of 'kitchen table' discussions to gather feedback on key topics
- 2.7** Establish an ongoing program of Yarning Circles and truth-telling with First Nations consumers across the region
- 2.8** Ensure consumers are represented on key committees and working groups

MEASURES

- Patient Reported Experience Measures (PREMs) response rate
- number of improvement initiatives from patient feedback
- amount of feedback received via consultation hub
- number of Yarning Circles per year
- number of kitchen table discussions
- number of consumers as members of HHS committees and working groups



3. More co-design

STRATEGIES

- 3.1** Promote how consumers can be part of designing and improving health services
- 3.2** Train key staff in co-design, ideally alongside consumers to support a two-way learning approach
- 3.3** Coach and mentor consumers in co-design, project management, and other skills to facilitate their contribution
- 3.4** Involve consumers in the recruitment of staff to key positions
- 3.5** Ensure consumers are involved throughout the design, implementation, and improvement of services
- 3.6** Develop a standardised process for ensuring consumer co-design in infrastructure projects
- 3.7** Support the delivery and review of an annual program of priority initiatives co-designed and co-delivered with the CAC and the ATSICAC
- 3.8** Prepare an annual consumer impact report to showcase the results of consumer co-design each year and celebrate these contributions through events, awards, and promotions
- 3.9** Create opportunities for consumer involvement in research
- 3.10** Apply a 'consumer-tested' brand to verify processes, procedures and outcomes that have been consumer co-designed

MEASURES

- number of staff coached in consumer co-design
- consumer attendance at coaching sessions
- number of quality improvement projects involving consumers
- number of new services co-designed with consumers
- number of infrastructure projects that include consumer co-design
- number of CAC and ATSICAC actions completed
- number of consumers involved in research
- number of products and outcomes that have the consumer-tested brand applied

Implementation

Outcomes

The key outcomes we hope to achieve from the implementation of this strategy include:

- communication with patients, consumers and families in ways that suit them
- consumer and community engagement is embedded in organisational culture
- health services are improved through co-design.

Monitoring

Operational plans and frameworks, including KPIs relating to consumer community and engagement, will form part of performance reporting.

Progress will be reported to executive management, CAC, ATSICAC, and the Board Stakeholder Engagement Committee, and publicly through the annual reporting process.

Governance

The Townsville Hospital and Health Board (Townsville HHB) and the Townsville HHS Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) are committed to embedding consumer and community engagement into our organisational culture and practices.

Both the Board and organisational leadership recognise consumer and community engagement as core business. Implementation of the strategy will be monitored and driven by all levels of the organisation.

A dedicated Implementation Group that includes consumer and staff representatives will own and drive the strategy.

The strategy will be reviewed each year as part of the annual planning cycle to ensure it remains current.



Multilingual staff across our health service are connecting with patients in their mother tongue.

Dr Bryony van Santen was one of the first Townsville HHS staff to adopt a language badge and regularly talks to patients from countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo who speak French. While the badges don't replace qualified interpreters, they certainly open the door for a good chat.



Townsville Hospital and Health Service

Consumer and Community Engagement Strategy

2023-2026