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# CONSUMER VOICES



News and views on health consumer issues - March 2023



## Health consumers call for action

Welcome to Consumer Voices, the new newsletter for Consumers Health Forum.

Over the coming months we will be making changes across the organisation to improve technology, communications and reporting. We hope you will find many benefits and renewed vigour with these improvements. They will aid better understanding and integration of consumer voices and opinions across the country. As we grow and change, this newsletter will be emailed every two weeks to everyone who has subscribed to Consumers Shaping Health and Health Update.

With only six weeks to go until the Federal Budget is handed down on 9 May, CHF is keenly awaiting news about which Strengthening Medicare initiatives will be funded.

As outlined in our [Federal Budget Submission](#), consumers are demanding greater access to bulk-billed GPs as the key priority.

Increasing the Medicare rebate is just one lever to improve GP access. Allowing other primary health professionals, such as nurse practitioners and pharmacists, to operate at their full scope, is another.

As various states trial different models of care where community pharmacists do more prescribing, our consumer consultations have revealed this is a complex and nuanced situation. You can [watch our prescribing webinar](#) or read an excellent [summary of the discussion](#).

However, we ultimately see extending pharmacist prescribing rights as a response to a symptom, not a cure. If consumers could readily see a GP when and where they wanted to – at an affordable price – the need for this kind of prescribing would be greatly reduced.

Whatever changes to our primary health system are introduced, we call on Minister Butler to fulfil his promise that consumers are engaged in the design and delivery of any new service.

CHF stands ready and able to support consumers in this role as we are the only national health consumer organisation that can voice your needs independent of any vested interests.

To do that we need sustainable funding to deliver on our mission.

We will be reaching out to our members and supporters in the lead-up to the budget to ensure the voice of consumers is heard.

The message to the government is clear.

Consumers are sick of talk and reviews. We need action.

It's time!

**Elizabeth Deveny**  
Chief Executive Officer



## Get involved



## Rural and Remote Special Interest Group

The Rural and Remote Special Interest Group (SIG) is recruiting new members. If you are a consumer representative or advocate with experience and interest in this area, you could join us to support CHF's policy and advocacy work, consult on government initiatives and raise awareness about improvements needed in rural and remote health care.

Please complete an [expression of interest form](#) to apply or contact Carolyn Thompson [c.thompson@chf.org.au](mailto:c.thompson@chf.org.au) for more information.

[More about Special Interest Groups](#)



## Medical Benefits Scheme (MBS) Review Advisory Committee Letter to CHF CEO

The MRAC is an independent, clinician and consumer-led committee established to advise Government, as part of the MBS Continuous Review, on publicly funded services listed on the MBS. Last week, Chair, Conjoint Professor Anne Duggan, wrote to CHF CEO, Elizabeth

Deveny, to encourage CHF members to keep in mind the [new MRAC webpage](#), published by the Department of Health and Aged Care, and regular communiques about the ongoing work of the committee.

[Read more](#)

## News and updates

### Campaign for Assistive Technology

Assistive Technology is an umbrella term that is used to describe any aid, piece of equipment or home modification that helps someone overcome the impact of disability.

The Assistive Technology for All (ATFA) campaign is an initiative of Council on the Ageing (COTA) Victoria. The work is coordinated by a national alliance of peak bodies and consumer advocates spanning the health, ageing and disability sectors. ATFA represents millions of people with disability, their families and Carers. These campaign resources [JG1] are available for peer support groups and networks to share amongst members and encourage people to become involved in the lead up to the Federal Budget.

[Find out more](#)



### Peer Mentor Group for supported decision making

You are invited to join a peer mentor group, led by people with disability for people with disability, run by the Council for Intellectual Disability.

Meet new people and learn about your rights to make decisions. You can sign up by going to [this website](#).

If you have any questions, email Basak on [basak@cid.org.au](mailto:basak@cid.org.au) or call 1800 424 065 and ask for Basak.

**Basak Batmaz, Inclusion Projects Officer**

## Your Health

### Why are cough medicines containing pholcodine being recalled?

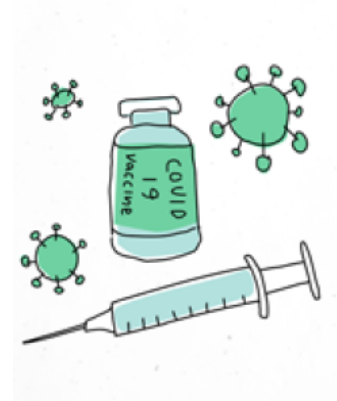
The TGA has recalled a number of over-the-counter medicines for “dry tickly coughs” which contain pholcodine. Brands such as Amcal, Benedryl, Codral, Duro-Tuss and Diffam and includes cough syrups and lozenges. The full list [can be found here](#). The reasoning behind this move is the risk to patients of anaphylaxis weeks or months after taking the medicines when taking muscle relaxants during surgery. of an anaphylaxis.

[Read more](#)

## Covid Vaccine

A reminder that all adults over 18 can get a Covid-19 booster if it has been six months or more since your last booster, or you had a confirmed infection. This is recommended for people over 65, and those between 18 — 65 years who are at risk of severe illness. [More information about boosters](#)

It's free - see your doctor or pharmacist



## Consultation

### Pharmacy Council of Australia Standards

The Pharmacy Council of Australia [has opened consultations](#) for the Accreditation Standards for prescriber education programs

The consultation is open to all stakeholders and interested people and the feedback will inform the development of the new standards.

The first round of consultation closes midnight Monday 10 April 2023. For any questions, reach out to [standards@pharmacycouncil.org.au](mailto:standards@pharmacycouncil.org.au)

[Find out more](#)

## Awareness campaigns

### Closing the Gap Week

Last week was National Close the Gap week, Basic social determinants of health in communities are intrinsic to closing the gap for Indigenous Australians. In February the government released an 2023 Commonwealth Closing the Gap [implementation plan](#) including new measures to fund clean drinking water, projects to accelerate building of housing in remote parts of Northern Territory targeting the worst overcrowding, a National Strategy for Food Security and support for women and children experiencing family violence. The [12th Annual report is available here](#).

### Advanced Care Planning Week

Advance care planning involves planning for your future health care. It enables you to make decisions now about health care you would or would not like to receive if you were to become seriously ill. Learn more about Advanced Care Planning.

[Learn more](#)

## Consumer opportunities

### Consumer representative

The Australian Teletrial Program Steering Committee, Queensland Health is seeking two consumer advisor nominations.



The ATP Steering Committee will guide and direct the activities of the Regional Clinical Trial Coordinating Centres (RCCCs) and partner jurisdictions. The Steering Committee will play a significant role in ensuring successful implementation of the Program. Appointments will be made for three years and you will be paid to prepare for and attend two meetings month.

Expressions of interest should be sent to Kaye Hewson [Australian\\_teletrial\\_program@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:Australian_teletrial_program@health.qld.gov.au) by 5pm (AEDT), Friday, 07 April 2023.

[Read more](#)

## Consumer representative for conference committee

The organising committee is seeking a consumer representative for the [3rd Australasian COVID-19 Conference](#), to be held on 27-28 July 2023 in Brisbane.

The conference will be a 2 day single stream event and will be made up of content across the following four (4) themes:

- Clinical management & therapeutics
- Social, political and cultural aspects
- Basic science
- Epidemiology, prevention and health promotion

The primary role will be to develop content and recommend speakers and topics. Professor Catherine Bennett, A/Professor Edwina Wright, Dr Dean Murphy and Dr Kirsty Short are on the Committee. Contact Cara Bruce [Cara.Bruce@ashm.org.au](mailto:Cara.Bruce@ashm.org.au) for more information

## Webinar replays



## To prescribe or not to prescribe: community pharmacist prescribing rights in Australia

In this webinar, you will hear from Dr Fei Sim, President of the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, Dr Michael Nolan, GP, and Aish Nadu, who will share her personal perspectives as a health care consumer and advocate. [View the replay here](#)

[Watch the replay](#)

## Strengthening Medicare Taskforce report: a community briefing

All you need to know about the Taskforce report and CHF's response. Join Consumers Health Forum CEO, Elizabeth Deveny in a discussion about the recommendations from the Strengthening Medicare Taskforce Report released on 3 February 2023.

[Watch the replay](#)

## Become a member



### Consumer representative program

Consumer representatives are nominated for national committees to ensure that the views and interests of health consumers are represented at the national level. CHF supports consumer representatives by providing resources in a number of ways. Find out how to become a [Consumer Rep](#)

#### CONSUMER REPRESENTATIVE PROGRAM

As a member of CHF you will be kept up to date on key health reform issues through our publications and member alerts. CHF membership enables you to influence the national health agenda by contributing to CHF surveys and polls, consultations and campaigns. Members can draw on CHF position statements, media releases and policy submissions to inform your work and advocacy.

**JOIN US - Become a member**

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