

Ms Hilda BASTIAN

Hilda Bastian, Lou McCallum, National Health Priority Action Council Consumer Network

Beyond The Rhetoric: Measuring Consumer Participation In The National Health Priority Areas Initiative.

Abstract

Many performance indicators that aim to measure consumer participation or engagement in health policy or service development are in use around Australia. There is little strong empirical demonstration that these indicators can reliably measure the quality and extent of consumer participation strategies or reliably indicate impact of these activities on policy or program outcomes.

The National Health Priority Action Council (NHPAC) oversees or works closely with programs in the seven national health priority areas: arthritis, asthma, cancer, diabetes, heart disease and stroke, injury prevention and mental health. Among the Council's priorities in its own activities is to ensure that consumers are central to its work, and that programs are developed which can enable consumers to participate more actively in their own health. A Consumer Network within the Council supports consumers at the national level, and seeks to increase the ability of consumers and the National Health Priority Area initiative to meet its aims, particularly in consumer participation.

One of the initiatives of the Consumer Network, in conjunction with the NHPAC secretariat and other interested parties, is to develop a methodology for tracking and measuring the impact of consumer participation in NHPAC and the diverse range of National Health Priority Areas. The goal is to gather meaningful information that can enable NHPAC to:

- gain an overall picture of the strengths and weaknesses of its progress towards enabling consumer participation in policy and program development and health care;
- map progress of consumer participation over time; and
- compare status and progress of consumer participation between the seven National Health Priority Areas.

The first phase of the *Beyond the Rhetoric* project involved a literature review of measurement and assessment methods in a variety of conceptual traditions and disciplines, including: consumer movements, community development in health, social capital development, quality improvement, indigenous-controlled health care, triple-bottom line accounting and measurement of organisational culture. A discussion paper mapped out key approaches being used in these areas, and a diverse group of key informants from these traditions were brought together in a Think Tank. A smaller multi-disciplinary working group helped progress the tasks of mapping the activities where measurement would be useful, and develop a methodology to be used and evaluated. This group worked alongside the NHPAC Performance Advisory Group to refine the chosen process and outcome measures and to analyse the strength of the evidence base supporting the chosen techniques.

This paper will present the measurement methodology developed through this process, together with the data from applying the technique to a pilot group of National Health Priority Area activities. This work is part of an ongoing project to refine, evaluate and validate process and

outcome measures for consumer participation, led by consumers, with a multi-disciplinary working team.

The *Proceedings* of the conference **Health Outcomes 2003: The Quest for Practice Improvement** are produced on CDROM. The *Proceedings* contain all abstracts and most of the papers presented at the conference, as well as all slide and poster presentations. If you would like to purchase the *Proceedings* please complete and return the [order form](#) or contact ahoc@uow.edu.au (Tel. 02 4221 4411).

The order form is at <http://www.uow.edu.au/commerce/ahoc/ConferenceProceedingsOrderForm.pdf>