

Partnering with Consumers Case Study:

Western Health

Person-centred approaches and consumer partnerships

Person-centred approaches and strong consumer partnerships are critical for delivering care that meets people’s needs, achieving better health outcomes for communities and ensuring better value for health services. They also underpin the Partnering with Consumers Standard of the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards. However, each health service organisation is on its own journey and must determine what strategies work best for their local communities and service delivery contexts.

This case study is one of eight, designed to assist other health services working to embed person-centred care. It highlights the person-centred approaches and strategies that Western Health uses to partner with consumers, including:

- A. Embedding partnering with consumers through organisation-wide strategies, a supportive culture and encouragement from leadership**
- B. Using structured processes that support consumers to be effective and meaningful partners in governance and quality improvement**
- C. Having many approaches to meeting the needs of a diverse community**
- D. Partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through a new model for maternity care**
- E. Using technology to enhance patient communication and data collection for quality improvement**

These themes and good practice examples have been aligned with the four criteria of the Partnering with Consumers Standard, and the seven attributes of high-performing person-centred healthcare organisations (the attributes), which are detailed below.






Partnering with Consumers Standard criteria

- 1** Clinical governance and quality improvement systems to support partnering with consumers
- 2** Partnering with patients in their own care
- 3** Health literacy
- 4** Partnering with consumers in organisational design and governance

Seven attributes of high-performing person-centred healthcare organisations



Snapshot of Western Health

Where	What	Whom
 <p>Major public health service in western Melbourne</p>	 <p>3 acute hospitals, one day hospital 1 transition care program A range of community-based services</p>	 <p>Population of more than 900,000 people Diverse and rapidly growing community, with projections of 1.3 million people by the year 2036 Approximately 38% speak a language other than English, which includes more than 110 different languages and dialects</p>

Overview

Western Health is a large public health service that services nearly 1 million Melburnians. Since its original case study in 2018, Western Health has continued to build on and embrace person-centred care and partnering with consumers. This has partially been achieved by further embedding the Best Care Framework, which guides Western Health’s approach to care delivery. Consumer representatives feel that there is a culture at Western Health that genuinely values and appreciates the consumer voice, and this culture has been supported by leaders in the organisation.

A. Embedding partnering with consumers through organisation-wide strategies, a supportive culture and encouragement from leadership

<p>Criterion</p>  <p>Clinical governance and quality improvement systems to support partnering with consumers</p>	<p>Attribute</p>  <p>Purpose, strategy and leadership</p>
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Western Health introduced its Best Care Framework in late 2013. It outlines how Western Health aims to deliver best care for everyone, every time and everywhere, with a focus on person-centred care.

Since 2018, the executive and board have strongly supported the Best Care Framework, which has resulted in it becoming more embedded in the organisation. Challenges that had been encountered historically are being overcome, including initial resistance from some clinicians and workforce members, and a lack of diversity in consumer representatives.

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There’s been a real shift in behaviour [since 2018]. The staff here now really value our voice and perspectives. Whereas previously it might have been seen as a threat, now they can see the benefit of talking with consumers.
– Consumer representative

Consumer representatives have seen great improvement in consumer engagement and the delivery of person-centred care since 2018. They said that executives and senior management had ‘gone out of their way’ to support consumer representatives. Leadership at all levels of the organisation are pushing initiatives, projects and pilots to support person-centred care. Importantly, the consumer representatives believe there has been a shift in culture



at the organisation. The workforce appreciates the consumer voice and perspective more, and now view these as assets.

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There is a genuine commitment from the board and the executive to engage consumers in clinical governance.

– Executive team member

B. Using structured processes that support consumers to be effective and meaningful partners in governance and quality improvement

<p>Criterion</p> <p> Clinical governance and quality improvement systems to support partnering with consumers</p>	<p>Attribute</p> <p> Governance</p>
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Western Health makes a concerted effort to help consumers participate in governance processes. It is always looking for opportunities to include consumers, and offers committee positions at many levels of governance and operations. This includes representation on the board-level Consumer Advisory Committee and Primary Care and Population Health Advisory Committee, as well as subcommittees across the organisation.

Western Health has a structured process for matching consumer representatives with committees and other governance bodies:



1. Western Health circulates an Expressions of Interest, asking interested consumers to nominate themselves for various committees.
2. A manager of consumer engagement, introduced at Western Health in 2020, leads a team to find consumer representatives and support their engagement with the health service.
3. The team matches consumers to specific committees based on their backgrounds, skills and interests. For example, consumer representatives with medical science backgrounds may be placed on committees that discuss clinical data and incidents, whereas those with an interest or background in education may be placed on committees that focus on health literacy.
4. The manager of consumer engagement regularly contacts each consumer representative to ensure they are supported and feel they can contribute in a meaningful way, including periodic training on various aspects of the health service.

The manager of consumer engagement role has provided dedicated resources that support relationship building, community outreach and mentorship for new consumer representatives. This has allowed Western Health to recruit consumers from community groups not represented previously, such as African migrants and refugee groups. Most Western Health committees now have two consumers, enabling a consumer representative peer support network.

The Western Health workforce provides support for consumer representatives so they are fully prepared to contribute to committees and discussions. Support includes:

- Committee secretaries meeting with consumer representatives once committee papers have been circulated, briefing them on content and answering any questions they might have
- Talking with consumer representatives after committee meetings, to debrief and provide any useful information
- Offering formal learning opportunities so consumers can increase their skills, experience and knowledge.

C. Having many approaches to meeting the needs of a diverse community

<p>Criterion</p> <p> Partnering with consumers in organisational design and governance</p>	<p>Attribute</p> <p> Purpose, strategy and leadership</p>
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The Consumer Advisory Committee has diverse membership representing the various groups within the Western Health community. The Primary Care Committee includes representation from the local primary health network, allowing access to demographic and health data. Western Health also maintains and updates a consumer register. This allows Western Health to identify and engage with consumers in both one-off and longer-term activities across the organisation.

Box 1 outlines the ways Western Health have met the needs of its diverse consumer base.

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People from all parts of the community sit on the Consumer Advisory Committee; it's very inclusive. We go out and talk and we're part of the community. If there's something going on that Western Health needs to know about, we'll hear and bring that back.

– Consumer representative



The diversity of consumer representatives has increased in recent years, although Western Health acknowledges there is still work to be done. The organisation is identifying representatives from multicultural communities and other key populations, such as the LGBTIQ+ community. They are invited to participate on subcommittees, with support to grow and develop. The aim is to build the skills and confidence of these representatives so they can participate in roles on the board and other major committees, such as the Safety and Quality Committee.

Box 1: Strategies to meet the needs of a culturally diverse community

The strategies Western Health have adopted to meet the needs of their diverse community include:

- Asking consumer representatives to participate in scenario testing for new developments and redevelopments. These help Western Health understand how specific scenarios would be managed
- Engaging members from culturally diverse backgrounds to offer wayfinding support to consumers
- Performing multicultural auditing of services and buildings to make sure that the information provided, wayfinding, layout and signage are appropriate for the culturally diverse community
- Performing cultural safety audits to assist with meeting requirements of local community groups
- Partnering with local schools to build health literacy and highlight opportunities for further study and employment
- Providing pet therapy, to support those in drug and alcohol rehabilitation services
- Improving person-centred care and health equity using frameworks, including the Aboriginal Health Cultural Safety Plan and the Disability Access and Inclusion Action Plan. A Health Literacy Action Plan and an LGBTIQ+ Action Plan are currently under development.

D. Partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through a new model for maternity care

Criterion	Attribute
 <p>Partnering with patients in their own care</p>	 <p>Comprehensive care delivery</p>

The Galinjera Maternity Program at Sunshine Hospital is part of a multi-site research program funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council. It supports continuity of midwifery care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. A dedicated team works with maternity services to improve identification procedures, form strong community partnerships, and improve and promote the delivery of culturally and clinically safe care. The team comprises four midwives, two obstetricians and a social worker. All are trained in cultural safety.

Since the program was introduced in 2017, there has been an increase in the identification and referral of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to maternity and midwifery services at Sunshine Hospital. The hospital has also seen better birth weights and birth outcomes as a result of the program.

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Since we started [the Galinjera Maternity Program], we’ve seen a huge uplift in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and families coming to us for maternity care. We’ve got families travelling from outside the catchment.

– Consumer representative

E. Using technology to enhance patient communication and data collection for quality improvement

<p>Criterion</p> <p> Partnering with patients in their own care</p>	<p>Attribute</p> <p> Technology and the built environment</p>
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Western Health has invested in technology to support the delivery of person-centred care and effectively partner with their local communities (Table 1).

Table 1: How Western Health uses technology to support person-centred care

Technology	Description
CALD Assist app	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps clinicians communicate with patients from multicultural communities when an interpreter isn't available Has more than 200 phrases commonly used during basic care interactions that are translated and recoded into 10 different languages, and provides answer options so patients can respond to simple questions Includes photos and videos to support communication Increases workforce confidence in communicating with patients from multicultural backgrounds, and that most the workforce and patients felt that it was a useful tool for communicating with those from a non-English speaking background Was developed by Western Health in partnership with CSIRO, with support from Better Care Victoria.
Patient Feedback app	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows easy, real-time collection of patient-reported outcome measures and patient-reported experience measures Is an addition to existing methods of collecting and using patient-reported measures for quality improvement, such as patient stories Was developed in partnership with a technology start-up company.
Electronic medical record reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create automated reports that use data from the electronic healthcare record Create dashboards that look at the experience of focus populations, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people Help Western Health understand whether individual consumers are receiving care aligned with their documented needs Are important for monitoring current person-centred care initiatives and identifying the need for future improvements. Were developed by the Western Health Performance Unit.

Technology	Description
Virtual Visiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps patients video-call family or friends. Western Health estimates that up to 70% of patients need help using smart devices to contact family Allows Virtual Visit timeslots and offers technical support to patients or families who need it Has had overwhelmingly positive consumer feedback: <p><i>'We cannot thank you enough for enabling this Zoom session with our dad today. Dad was very confident because you were so patient and reassuring.'</i></p> <p><i>'Thank you so much for this. I had a really special birthday and got to see my mum, children and cat! What a special birthday.'</i></p> <p><i>'The virtual visits are fantastic. My brother and I enjoy seeing the exercises conducted with dad as it helps us understand how we can help him when he comes home and keep those exercises going. Even just the social chats are always nice as given the COVID situation, it's been a long time since we've been able to see him. We consider ourselves lucky that we can organise these visits borrowing the hospital iPads and computers, so thank you for that.'</i></p>
CBORD Patient app	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows patients choose the meals they would like to receive in hospital Is available to all Western Health patients, with rollout across the organisation fast-tracked during the COVID-19 pandemic. It has been particularly useful for isolated patients who otherwise would have received the 'default' meal, as food services staff cannot enter patient rooms to discuss meal choices Is becoming popular among patients because it gives them control over their meals and contributes to a more positive and satisfying hospital experience Allows family and carers to help the patient select their preferred meals remotely from outside the hospital Shares information with the hospital systems, meaning it will only show patients the meal options that are suitable for their diet.

Find out more

Further information and resources on the attributes of high-performing person-centred healthcare organisations, the Partnering with Consumers Standard and the development of the case studies include:

- [Person-centred healthcare organisations](#)
- [National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards](#)
- [2018 case study: Sunshine Hospital and Western Health](#)
- [Western Health](#)
- [Western Health CALD Assist.](#)

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Level 5, 255 Elizabeth Street, Sydney NSW 2000
GPO Box 5480, Sydney NSW 2001



@ACSQHC

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