

CHILDREN BY CHOICE

Consumer Advisory Group – Terms of Reference

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1. Introduction

These Terms of Reference (ToR) establish the formal structure, scope, and operations of the Consumer Advisory Group (CAG). The CAG supports Children by Choice and Queensland Health by enhancing consumer and community engagement, specific to Termination of Pregnancy (ToP) services across Queensland. Through structured consultation, the group ensures that the lived experiences of community members shape the planning, implementation, and evaluation of strategies, resources, and proposed changes to access.

2. Vision and Purpose

The CAG provides a platform for lived experience voices to shape the design and delivery of the ToP Access Project. It ensures inclusive consultation and informs the broader community of project outcomes. The group prioritises the perspectives of those experiencing systemic healthcare barriers.

Priority populations include:

- First Nations women and pregnant people
- Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women and pregnant people
- Women and pregnant people with disability
- Members of LGBTIQ+ communities
- Women and pregnant people living in rural and remote areas
- Women and pregnant people in contact with the justice system.

This aligns with Health Consumers Queensland (HCQ) Consumer and Community Engagement Framework and its five key principles of:

1. **Partnership:** Engagement is a shared responsibility between health services, consumers, carers, and communities.
2. **Respect:** Consumers and communities bring valuable lived experience, knowledge, and insight. Their input must be respected and welcomed.
3. **Transparency:** Communication should be open, honest, and accountable. Participants should know how their contributions influence decisions.
4. **Diversity and Inclusion:** Engagement must include diverse voices — including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and people with disability.
5. **Influence:** Engagement should have a real impact on policy, planning, and service delivery. Consumers must be able to see how their input is used.

3. Objectives

The Consumer Advisory Group (CAG) works to ensure equitable access to termination of pregnancy (ToP) services through inclusive, collaborative, and consumer-informed strategies.

Its objectives are to:

- Identify barriers to equitable ToP access and propose solutions
- Ensure engagement strategies are inclusive, safe, and culturally appropriate
- Provide space and facilitation for the co-design of resources to support increased ToP access for priority communities
- Promote representation and participation in Queensland Health working groups by members of priority communities

4. Roles and Responsibilities

The Consumer Advisory Group (CAG) serves as an advisory body to Queensland Health and is facilitated by Children by Choice. In line with Health Consumers Queensland's (HCQ) emphasis on transparent governance, consumer-driven agenda setting, and informed decision-making, each partner has a defined role to ensure meaningful and inclusive engagement throughout the project.

Queensland Health is responsible for:

- Considering and responding to CAG advice in service design and delivery
- Participating in meetings and providing relevant updates and feedback
- Ensuring CAG insights inform broader system-level planning and evaluation

Children by Choice is responsible for:

- Facilitating CAG meetings and providing administrative support
- Supporting member participation through accessible materials and inclusive practices
- Coordinating consumer recruitment, onboarding, and ongoing support
- Ensuring a trauma-informed, culturally safe engagement process
- Supporting participants journey through entering and exiting the CAG by
 - Our skilled Pregnancy Options Team connecting with motivated participants
 - Provision of social work and counselling supporting throughout the participant's journey
 - Supporting in capturing consumer experiences ethically and in culturally appropriate formats such as providing empathy interviewing.

CAG Members are responsible for:

- Advising on priority issues based on lived experience
- Highlighting opportunities and challenges in accessing ToP services throughout Qld
- Proposing topics for further community or organisational attention and consultation

- Supporting inclusive decision-making processes and co-design processes in developing resources with priority population

5. Membership Structure and Criteria

The Consumer Advisory Group (CAG) is made up of individuals who reflect the diversity of Queensland's priority populations and bring valuable lived experience to inform equitable service development. The membership structure is designed to ensure broad representation, transparency, and ethical participation in line with Health Consumers Queensland (HCQ) principles.

Membership includes:

- Up to twelve (12) consumer representatives from the six (6) identified priority populations, with a minimum of one (1) representative from each group
- Non-voting project team members
- One to two (1–2) CAG Chairs, depending on the co-chair model selected by the group

Recruitment will involve:

- Expressions of Interest (EOIs) promoted via accessible platforms (e.g. online, community newsletters, and social media)
- Direct invitations extended through trusted community organisations services priority populations.
- Invitation to join after engaging in support from CbyC direct client work. All participants are supported through assessment of suitability prior to joining.
- Distribution of clear, accessible materials outlining the role and expectations—available at relevant community events, GP clinics, and local service providers

New members will be required to:

- Complete an orientation and sign a confidentiality agreement
- Provide a brief biography
- Sign a consent agreement confirming their willingness to participate in core CAG roles and attend required meetings

Terms

- Terms are for 12 or 24 months, with the possibility of extension or reapplication annually, subject to approval.

6. Members Roles and Expectations

The success of the Consumer Advisory Group (CAG) relies on clear roles, mutual respect, and strong support structures to enable meaningful participation. Members and project staff each have distinct responsibilities that contribute to the group's effectiveness and ensure alignment with Health Consumers Queensland (HCQ) guidance on capacity building and inclusive engagement.

CAG members are expected to:

- Attend meetings and contribute actively
- Respect differing views and uphold confidentiality
- Represent broader community interests
- Review and comment on draft documents and engagement activities
- Participate in requested Queensland Health working groups

Project team responsibilities include:

- Organising and supporting meetings
- Providing accessible background materials
- Coordinating reimbursements and honorariums
- Upholding trauma-informed, inclusive practices

7. Meetings and Operations

To support inclusive participation and effective governance, the Consumer Advisory Group (CAG) will operate under a structured and accessible meeting model. This approach ensures that all members are informed, supported, and able to contribute meaningfully, while also fostering consumer leadership in line with Health Consumers Queensland (HCQ) best practices.

Meetings will:

- Occur quarterly, with flexibility for additional sessions as needed
- Be conducted in a hybrid format (online and in-person)
- Last approximately 1.5 to 2 hours

Meeting management will include:

- Advance distribution of agendas and supporting documents
- Use of accessible formats and plain language communication
- Documentation of minutes and action items

Chairing Structure:

- A consumer co-chair model may be adopted

- The Chair (2-year term) will lead meetings, ensure diverse voices are heard, and liaise with the project team
- A Deputy Chair will support the Chair and step in when required

8. Quorum and Decision-Making

To ensure fair, transparent, and respectful participation in decision-making, the Consumer Advisory Group (CAG) will operate under clear quorum and decision-making protocols. These processes reflect Health Consumers Queensland's (HCQ) emphasis on inclusive engagement and shared accountability.

Quorum is defined as:

- Attendance by at least 50% plus one of all members must be present at any meeting to validate proceedings

Decisions will:

- Be made by consensus where possible
- Include documentation of dissenting views to ensure transparency

9. Remuneration and Reimbursement

To recognise the time, expertise, and lived experience that consumer members bring to the Consumer Advisory Group (CAG), fair and ethical compensation will be provided in line with Health Consumers Queensland (HCQ) guidelines. This approach ensures that participation is accessible and valued.

Consumer members will receive:

- Payment aligned with Health Consumers Queensland guidelines
- Reimbursements or pre-payments for reasonable participation expenses, such as:
- Transport
- Childcare
- Internet/data access

10. Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest

To uphold the integrity and trust central to the work of the Consumer Advisory Group (CAG), all members are expected to follow clear standards of conduct and transparency, in alignment with Health Consumers Queensland's (HCQ) ethics and engagement standards.

Members must:

- Maintain confidentiality of discussions and documentation

- Disclose any potential or actual conflicts of interest at the earliest opportunity
- Consent to the publication of their names unless they request otherwise

A formal confidentiality agreement and conflict of interest policy will be implemented.

11. Termination of Membership

Membership in the Consumer Advisory Group (CAG) is a voluntary commitment guided by mutual respect and accountability. In certain circumstances, membership may conclude through the following processes:

- Voluntary resignation with one month's written notice
- Organisational termination due to:
 - Inactivity (e.g., missing three consecutive meetings without notice)
 - Breach of conduct or confidentiality
 - Undisclosed conflicts of interest

All changes to membership will be communicated in writing and managed respectfully.

12. Evaluation and Performance Monitoring

To ensure accountability, continuous improvement, and meaningful consumer engagement, the Consumer Advisory Group (CAG) will undergo regular evaluation. These processes are designed to assess the group's effectiveness, influence on outcomes, and alignment with Health Consumers Queensland (HCQ) best practice.

The CAG's performance will be reviewed:

- Biannually, following the second and fourth CAG meetings of each year
- At the finalisation of the Consumer Advisory project

Evaluations will consider:

- Member reflections and feedback
- CAG impact on project outcomes
- Contribution to service improvements

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will include:

- Quorum achievement
- Committee evaluations
- Progress on strategic goals
- Co-designed resources developed during the CAG's lifespan

An annual review of these Terms of Reference and the group's overall function will be undertaken by project members in consultation with the CAG Chair. Updates may be made to maintain relevance and effectiveness.

Appendix A – HCQ Principles Summary

Health Consumers Queensland (HCQ) recommends that consumer engagement should be:

- Inclusive: Representing the diversity of the community
- Transparent: With clear governance and decision-making processes
- Supported: Through remuneration, capacity-building, and training
- Valued: Contributions are acknowledged and acted upon
- Ethical: Requiring confidentiality and conflict of interest policies
- Evaluated: With KPIs and regular feedback loops

Appendix B – Useful Resources and References

1. Health Consumers Queensland Engagement Framework: www.hcq.org.au/framework
2. Queensland Health Consumer Strategy: www.health.qld.gov.au/consumers
3. National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards: www.safetyandquality.gov.au
4. Health Consumers Queensland Consumer Handbook: www.hcq.org.au/consumer-handbook
5. Reimbursement Guidelines: www.hcq.org.au/remuneration