**Consumer transition from committees**

**Why have a guide?**

*“It was most rewarding contributing to the committee over many years and to build relationships and knowledge. When my term finished, there was just a simple thank you, goodbye, see you later.”*

Les Leckie, Consumer Representative

The substantial growth in consumer engagement in healthcare and medical research has led to consumer roles on committees, steering groups and advisory groups. The ongoing cycle of committee membership helps ensure continuity and turnover is a useful process for any level of governance. How a consumer transitions away from committee duties has significant implications for both organisation and consumer. This guide can help with some of the challenges in the transition process.

The elevation of a consumer perspective in decision-making processes often provides the opportunity to engage with staff and other consumers across an organisation. During committee involvement, a consumer acquires valuable insight and corporate understanding, builds working relationships and establishes valuable networks and contacts. This guide can help to retain consumer knowledge and experience.

To achieve better health outcomes, health services, researchers and professionals work together with consumers and communities who bring the expertise of a lived experience. Building a culture of effective consumer collaboration is a key asset to the health sector. Consumers leaving committees and interested in staying connected may consider reaching an agreement with the organisation about a new role. This guide provides practical ways to support everyone involved in the transition process.

**Transition from committees**

There are many reasons why consumers may leave a committee. The end of a membership term is only one example; a consumer may also leave due to a change in circumstances or leave voluntarily for personal or professional reasons. Inconsistencies in how organisations respond when members finish on a committee – from little or no recognition to broad acknowledgement – can impact whether a consumer decides to continue advocacy efforts.

**Planning for how consumers transition from a committee can help:**

* recognise contribution,
* apply consumers’ acquired knowledge and expertise,
* build capacity by transitioning consumers to other roles,
* explore training and other opportunities to participate or assist in, and
* maintain a relationship with committed consumers.

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**Practical guide**

**Conversation starter**

* Consider having a conversation to acknowledge and discuss the end of committee membership.
* For a consumer leaving a committee, it can be helpful to give sufficient notice to the Chair or Manager before the last meeting.
* Consider organising a one-on-one meeting.
* Respectfully acknowledge if the consumer wants to finish with the organisation.
* Offer suggestions for identifying potential new roles if the consumer would like to continue with the organisation.

**Committee exit interview**

* Closing the loop can be a mechanism that provides opportunities to discuss outcomes.
* A conversation about achievements and contributions can be useful to provide examples of consumer influence or impact.
* A two-way dialogue is a way to see what worked well, what can improve, and how both can learn from the experience.

**Future involvement**

* Explore opportunities and other roles that exist within an organisation to retain the skills and knowledge.
* Share resources to understand the various activities of consumer engagement (1) and look for training opportunities within the health sector.
* If transitioning consumers into a new role, ensure expectations and understandings are clear to all.

**Acknowledgement and recognition**

* Acknowledge to the Committee the change in membership.
* Suggestions for recognition can be to:
	+ Dedicate an agenda item at the consumer’s last meeting to acknowledge contribution and impact
	+ Organise a thank you presentation or speech, provide an opportunity for the consumer to respond
	+ Send a thank you letter stating period of consumer membership and contribution made.

1. VCCC Alliance Model of Consumer Engagement and activities <https://vcccalliance.org.au/our-work/consumer-engagement/model/>