

Community Advisory Council communiqué

M5 / 2021

The Community Advisory Council (CAC) met online.

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and acknowledged the traditional custodians of the lands where members were located for the meeting and paid their respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

CEO update

Mr Fletcher highlighted two areas of recent focus: cosmetic surgery and the Senate Inquiry. He thanked CAC member Patricia Hall for her attendance at the Senate Inquiry and noted that members were probably aware of the recent media attention on cosmetic surgery. He went on to outline some of the complex issues in the area, for example, the proliferation of cosmetic surgery advertising on social media.

Members responses focused on the importance of mandatory reporting to address under-reporting of concerns, noting that the degree to which the community continues to hear 'we knew about it' after the fact is disturbing. Members also noted that there is an inherent dilemma with mandatory reporting for practitioners working in small clinics because the effects of the reporting could include them losing their job. Members also said that consumers don't necessarily see cosmetic surgery as a medical procedure and Mr Fletcher agreed and noted that the language used (nip and tuck) doesn't indicate that it is potentially a serious surgical intervention.

Mr Fletcher also updated the Council on scoping work underway looking at what action can be taken to support practitioners subject to regulatory processes who are at risk suicide. Members recognised that among practitioners the fear of a notification is very real and significant and suggested the importance of engagement at university level about Ahpra and how regulation works.

Consumer checklist when seeking cosmetic surgery

Ms Davies informed the Council about work underway to develop a consumer checklist for use when seeking cosmetic surgery. Ms Davies said that discussions had focused on Ahpra's role in patient safety and cosmetic surgery. She noted discussions had landed on highlighting that cosmetic surgeries carry risk and helping consumers make an informed decision.

Members suggested starting with consumers who might be at risk or who might not know how to or be able to stand up for themselves and gave the example of CALD communities and younger people.

Members suggested consumers might be better placed to ask questions such as 'how many of these procedures do you do a year', 'what is your success rate' rather than what are your skills and qualifications and that a similar approach could be taken as developed for awareness raising about 'backyard dentists' and what consumers should look out for.

Ahpra's revised Privacy Policy

Ms Giuliani and Ms Clark updated the Council on changes made to the revised Privacy Policy to incorporate the Council's feedback provided at the September 2021 meeting.

Members suggested developing an easy fact sheet or flow chart about the stages of the process or a one pager document to help readers with a complex policy document.

Update cosmetic surgeons protected title consultation/Senate inquiry

Mr Lord advised that the Senate Inquiry is almost complete and that we anticipate the report will be published soon. He noted the next steps will be that the Commonwealth Government will be asked for a response to the recommendations in the report and that at some point Ahpra will be asked for input.

Mr Lord noted that although the inquiry didn't start off in relation to cosmetic surgery it had become a focus. He also noted that the Victorian government is leading the consultation on the protected title for cosmetic surgery and is finalising important details before starting the consultation.

Planning session: CAC and Forum of NRAS Chairs works

Ms Hall led the Council through a planning session on a proposed workshop between the Council and the Forum of NRAS Chair to look at ways the National Boards can engage with the Council.

Notifier Support Steering Committee

Ms Chivers provided an update on the Notifier Support Service, advising that work has been done to streamline the referral service and ensure appropriate cases are referred.

Shared Code of Conduct Working Group

Ms Papadopoulos advised that the shared Code of Conduct is almost at completion and highlighted that it incorporates ways of working to close the gap and eradicate racism from health care.

Consumer health complaints project

Ms Griffiths updated the Council on the project exploring opportunities for the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (the Commission) and Ahpra to improve the consumer experience of making a health complaint in Australia. She outlined the project objectives including to better understand consumers' experience of health care complaints in the general and mental healthcare sector and identify any opportunities for the Commission and Ahpra to improve the consumer experience and support complaints management at the local health provider level.

Members noted two schematics mapping the consumer experience clearly demonstrated the complexity of the experience and commented that it would be interesting to see how regional hospitals and their relationship to mandatory notifications relates to the work.

Mark Bodycoat

Chair
Community Advisory Council