

CHF Policy Primer

System Advocacy



As a member of the Australian community, your voice and experience of healthcare can be used to shape and improve how the larger healthcare system works. There are two common ways to do this: formal Public Consultations or by writing to the Federal Minister.

Public Consultations

Different components of the Federal Government often conduct public consultations calling for views and input into a range of different healthcare topics. Consultations can be initiated by any government body but the ones who most commonly are consulting on health related matters are:

- [The Federal Department of Health](#)
 - [The Therapeutic Goods Administration](#)
 - [The Office of Health Technology Assessment \(including the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee\)](#)

- [The Medical Services Advisory Committee \(MSAC\)](#)
- [The Independent Health and Aged Care Pricing Authority](#)
- [The National Health and Medical Research Council](#)
- [The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care](#)
- [The Department of Social Services](#)
- [The Productivity Commission](#)
- The Parliament of Australia
 - [Australian Senate Inquiries](#)
 - [House of Representative Inquiries](#)

The exact consultation process undertaken by each government body can vary, including whether a submission needs to be kept confidential until published by the consulting body. Each will detail their exact process and requirements on their website.

It may not always be easy to find out about consultations as they are not necessarily “front-page” news, so sometimes staying informed requires a proactive approach. This can be done by regularly reviewing the consultation websites linked above, or subscribing to their public communications channels such as newsletters and social media pages.

Additionally you can sign up to newsletter of peak advocacy bodies such as Consumers Health Forum and the Australian Council of

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Social Services to be kept up to date as to what is happening.

Write to the Minister

If there aren't any consultations happening relevant to your experience, you can also write directly to the Federal Minister responsible who can be found at: www.pm.gov.au/your-ministry.

The exact composition of the Federal Ministry changes somewhat frequently, but generally speaking there is at least one Minister responsible for Health and several Assistant Ministers with more narrow responsibilities e.g. Mental Health, Regional Health, Women's Health. There are also generally Ministers responsible for Health adjacent matters such as Aged Care, Disability etc.

When you write to a Minister you should specifically request that they reply to you to help ensure you get an official response so they know you are expecting one.

What should I say?

You should say whatever you think is relevant when responding to a consultation or writing to a Minister. You don't need to be a policy expert to respond to a consultation. Your 'expertise' is your lived experience. Real-life experiences help governments and decision makers understand what people actually need, and shape policies that are more connected, more personal, and work in real life.

When you are providing a submission or writing to a Minister, some general tips are:

- Be clear, concise and polite. If you find your submission is too long, provide a summary of your submission at the start.
- Outline the problem(s), your perspective and explain how it impacts you.
- Suggest solution(s).

For formal consultations, ensure you address the specific Consultation Questions or 'Terms of Reference' to ensure your response is considered relevant and accepted. You don't have to answer every questions in a consultation, but every answer should relate to a question being asked. Respond only where it's relevant to you and your experience.

Organisations undertaking consultations sometime provide resources to support consumers in preparing a submission e.g. recommended page limits. Always check the consultation deadline, as some organisations do not accept late submissions while others will give you extra time if you ask in advance. You are generally able to decide if you want to keep your submission private or made public. If the submission is made public, it may be published online. However, not all submissions are published especially in cases of private consultations.

If you do not wish to prepare your own response, you may instead collaborate with an organisation, such as CHF, that is already preparing a submission. This may involve contacting the organisation directly or participating in their surveys or roundtable discussions.

Outcomes of advocacy

The outcomes of consultations vary depending on their format and the organisation responsible. A report is usually produced based on all of the submissions received that summarises outcomes of the consultation and makes recommendations on next steps to address the issues.

If you write directly to a Minister, generally they or a representative will reply to you advising what, if anything, the Government is doing or planning to do in relation to the matters you raised with them