

Annual Report

Southern Community Health Council

1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024

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Message from Chair, Lyneta Russell

The past year has been a period of considerable change and uncertainty for all working in, associated with, or impacted by the health and disability system in New Zealand. As a result of the Health Reforms and changes in the consumer space Community Health Councils around New Zealand have questioned their future. But here in Southern we have been fortunate to have the unwavering support of both Health NZ-Southern, and WellSouth.

From the beginning of the year, we started to hear talk of Health NZ moves to centralise Community Health Councils and of different ways that consumer engagement might be undertaken. Mid-year these concerns were realised when it was announced that Regional Consumer Councils would be formed to strengthen consumer feedback and enable learnings to be applied consistently across our NZ healthcare networks. These were to be in place by 1st July 2024 and an extensive application process followed. To date only one of the four regional councils is up and running. Although Health NZ stressed their commitment to consumer engagement at the local level how this was to sit alongside the regional councils was unclear and many Consumer Councils around New Zealand were either told to wrap up or were left in limbo not knowing if they had a role moving forward. At this stage, though, there is hope that local Community Health Councils will continue to exist to ensure the local consumer and whānau voice can be heard. But it remains a case of watch this space.

One of New Zealand's core documents related to consumer engagement, the Code of Expectations, is due for review. As a Council we will provide a submission as this Code sets the expectations of how our health entities must work with consumers, whānau and communities in all stages of the planning, design, delivery and evaluation of services. All health entities are required to report annually on how the code is being applied. In the Southern region there is room for improvement, but I can report a commitment from the leadership teams to meeting the requirements of the Code. Workforce and funding constraints pose some limitations at present, but the commitment to consumer engagement at all levels is evident.

Despite the uncertainty I am proud of the commitment our Southern Community Health Council has had to remain focused on Southern consumer related issues. Alongside Community Advisors, Council members have continued to participate in a number of Council projects and committees across the Southern region, using their experience as consumers to have input into many aspects of the southern health and disability services. Top of mind over the past year has been the hospital rebuild, waiting lists and workforce related issues. On behalf of the Community Health Council, I once again extend my thanks to this wonderful group of people who give up their time and share their knowledge and experience to benefit all of us in the southern region.

Finally, I want to extend my thanks to the Community Health Council members for their ongoing commitment to consumer engagement and the experience and knowledge they bring to the Council. And to Kathryn Harkin, Consumer Liaison, who facilitates the work of the Council but is also kept busy keeping consumer engagement activities, such as Kōrero mai, top of mind in Health NZ-Southern services. Over the year it has been particularly good to see increased sharing between Health NZ Southern and WellSouth through clinical governance activities. This can only strengthen the consumer experience in our Southern services.

Lyneta Russell

Chair, Southern Community Health Council

Message from Group Director of Operations, Health NZ Southern, Hamish Brown

As we reflect on the past year, I would like to acknowledge the significant efforts and input from the Southern Community Health Council which have made a meaningful impact on our health services.

This year has brought its fair share of challenges, but we've also had many positive moments to celebrate, like the opening of Te Kāika Wellbeing Hub in Dunedin and Rākai Kahukura Wānaka Maternity Unit, and the roll out of the Kōrero Mai whānau escalation pathway and our Patient At Risk teams. All these initiatives are helping to improve access to health care for our community – a key objective of the Community Health Council.

As we shift to a new Health New Zealand Regional Consumer Council structure, I look forward to ongoing collaboration with the Council to ensure we continue to promote and provide appropriate and safe health care for our community.

I thank our local Community Health Council members, past and present, for their active voice representing our community, patients, and whānau and advocating for equity and access to health care for everyone.

Message from Chief Executive, Well South, Andrew Swanson-Dobbs

At the start of this year, the WellSouth board took the opportunity to look ahead at what primary healthcare for our region should look like. We reviewed our strategy, purpose, aims and vision.

To achieve our vision for the best health and wellbeing for communities in Otago and Southland, we need to support and empower primary healthcare providers to deliver more accessible and equitable primary care, getting the best care for people and whānau at the right time and place.

Our vision resonates with the Community Health Council's work, *promoting equity within the Southern health system*. The collaborative and advisory nature of the relationship we have with Lyneta and the council members is a critical soundboard and feedback mechanism to help steer us.

To provide care at the *right place* we take a wider approach. WellSouth supports general practice to deliver equity-driven care, and we encourage enrolment with general practice, but we also support community healthcare providers. Our new Māori and Pasifika Health Strategies led by our Māori and Pasifika Clinical Advisors provide a framework to deliver outcomes in high needs groups. We are supported by an equity-driven team and a dedicated Community Engagement Advisor.

We have enjoyed sharing this progress with the council, in turn taking these opportunities to get a better understanding of what council members are hearing from their community. The Community Health Council is an important direct line to communities, and your insights and feedback is invaluable.

For us, we must also focus on general practice. Staff and owners are reporting burn out as they struggle to keep practices sustainable, retain staff and keep fees affordable. They are the first port of call for our community when unwell, whether physically or mentally, and we must do more to support general practice.

We commissioned a Rural Services Review that shows inequities in service provision for our rural communities that we must address also.

We are all in this together, and we are all motivated to have a joined-up, responsive, equitable healthcare system that puts people at the heart of it no matter where they are.

We look forward to the ongoing co-operation, advice, and feedback from Chair, Lyneta Russell, and the wider council to achieve this together.

Community Health Council Members

Members of the Community Health Council over 2023-2024 were:

Lyneta Russell (Chair)

Paula Waby

Jason Searle

Kelly Takarua

June Mills

Toni Huls

Kathryn Wright

Beryl Wilcox

Chris Middlemass

Summary of the Year 2023-2024

To enable the Community Health Council to perform its function as an advisory council, guests are invited to monthly meetings to present their work and receive advice on how to progress this. In the last year, the below guests attended meetings. In addition, the council benefits from regular attendances (usually on a bi-monthly basis) from David Gow, Chief Medical Officer, John Marrable, Chair of the Disability Working Group, and Jack Ruddenklau and Marie Wales, Consumer Advisors on the Clinical Transformation Group for the New Dunedin Hospital.

Month	Guest/Topic Year 1
July 2023	<p>Jane Kelley – Home and Community Support Services</p> <p>Overview of the New Zealand Health Group. They rely on feedback from consumers as to what is going well and what is not.</p>
September 2023	<p>Emily Gill – New Dunedin Hospital</p> <p>Proposal presented for a transition planning community user group be established to focus on the Outpatient Building Transition Programme.</p> <p>Rich Stephenson – Emergency Department Waiting Times</p> <p>Delays in the Emergency Department represents pressure on the system overall rather than representing itself in isolation. One of the biggest challenges is ward resource/availability for patients who no longer need to be in the ED. There are opportunities for fast-tracking pathways and reducing ED attendance via community resources.</p>
November 2023	<p>Bronnie Grant – Hokonui Locality</p> <p>Update on this pilot locality, and an overview of national locality progress. There has been a greater focus on consumer participation since the locality has been formed and it has led to the development of a plan outlining local priorities.</p>

Month	Guest/Topic Year 1
December 2023	<p>Sarah Sharfe – Discharge Transfer of Care Form</p> <p>Feedback from members about a new discharge/transfer of care form which is variable depending on the circumstances of the patient.</p> <p>Kathryn Harkin – Consumer Engagement Quality Safety Marker results</p> <p>Results presented for the most recent Consumer Engagement Quality Safety Marker, the first under the new Code of Expectations framework. A significant change has been the focus on population groups and communities with poorer health outcomes, service awareness of who these are and subsequent efforts to engage with these communities.</p>
March 2023	<p>Craig Ashton – Update on Southern Blood and Cancer Service</p> <p>The service has been on the receiving end of some recent negative media attention, however Southern are in fact far exceeding the national average and are now far better than Canterbury for wait times for both First Specialist Appointment and treatment starting.</p>
April 2023	<p>Simon Donlevy, Adam McLeay, Linda Ryan, Joline Wilson – Southland Hospital Leadership Update</p> <p>Leadership team committed to demonstrating the value of the consumer voice and to identify what would actually make the difference to the community.</p> <p>Chroma Southland – Rainbow Community Update</p> <p>There are several specialised needs which are more likely for members of the rainbow community, these were highlighted for the council.</p>
May 2023	<p>William Robertson – Transition to Regional Consumer Councils</p> <p>Te Whatu Ora plans to move from district to regional consumer councils by 1 July, and are hoping to work collegially to manage the transition. This will not be the end of district level engagement, there will continue to be sub regional groups.</p>

Month	Guest/Topic Year 1
	<p>Bridget Dickson and Emily Gill – New Dunedin Hospital Update</p> <p>Outpatient building is on track to be open in 2026. Inpatient building has the piles down and will be open in 2029. Substantial increases in several key areas of capacity.</p>
June 2023	<p>Simon Donlevy – Southland Hospital</p> <p>Challenges due to recent strikes; internal medicine and physiotherapy services are struggling. Approval has been obtained to open four new beds for orthopaedic patients.</p> <p>James Goodwin and Kim Caffell – Restorative Practice</p> <p>Establishing a Restorative Practice Steering Group, which will include consumers and will use patient stories.</p>

Southern Consumer Advisors 2023-2024

Consumer Advisors on projects		
Marie Sutherland	Lauren Dewhirst	Bob Barlin
Carolyn Weston	David Buckingham	Samuel High
Catkin Bartlett	Melissa Vining	Heidi Gray-Holland
Marie Wales	Paul Colvin	Jaime Randhawa
John Marrable	Jo McKay	Leanne Illingworth
Jo Millar	Deli Diack	Jacqui Eggleton
David King	Danica Tauri	Kirsten Dixon
Tess Williamson	Heather Clay	Adam Hall
Kingi Dirks	Te Rangihiroa Rehutai	Philippa Henderson
Andrea Johnston	Claire Turner	Mee Boo Edgar
Lynne (George) Kerr	Bronnie Grant	Jack Ruddenklau
Rachel Cuthbertson	Rachel Sizemore	Luella Wheeler
Kylie Murdoch	Melissa Murdoch	Katie Ngahooro
Jasmin Taylor	Natalie Brown	James Sutherland
Cassie Campbell	Ricki-Lee Earwaker	John Noble
	Karen Browne	

