



Australian Government  
Office of the National Rural  
Health Commissioner

# Ensuring Community Voice and Tackling Inequities

## Rural Proofing for Health

13th OECD Rural Development Policy Conference

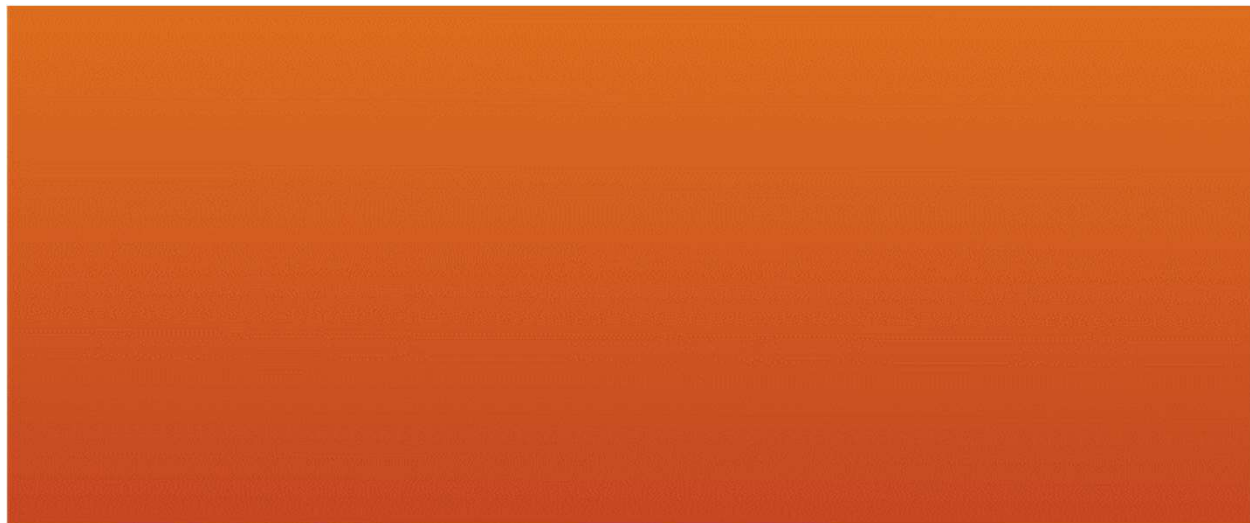
Adjunct Professor Ruth Stewart  
Australian National Rural Health Commissioner  
28 September 2022

# The Office of the National Rural Health Commissioner in Australia

- formulate advice for the Minister for Regional Health to improve the health of rural and remote Australians
- Consulting with community & key stakeholders
- Independent Statutory Office



L to R: Deputy Commissioner Shelley Nowlan, Commissioner Ruth Stewart , Deputy Commissioner Faye McMillan



# Consumer Engagement

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# Community voice in the Ottawa Charter...



*World Health Organisation 2012, Ottawa Charter for health promotion*

# Partnering with Consumers Standard

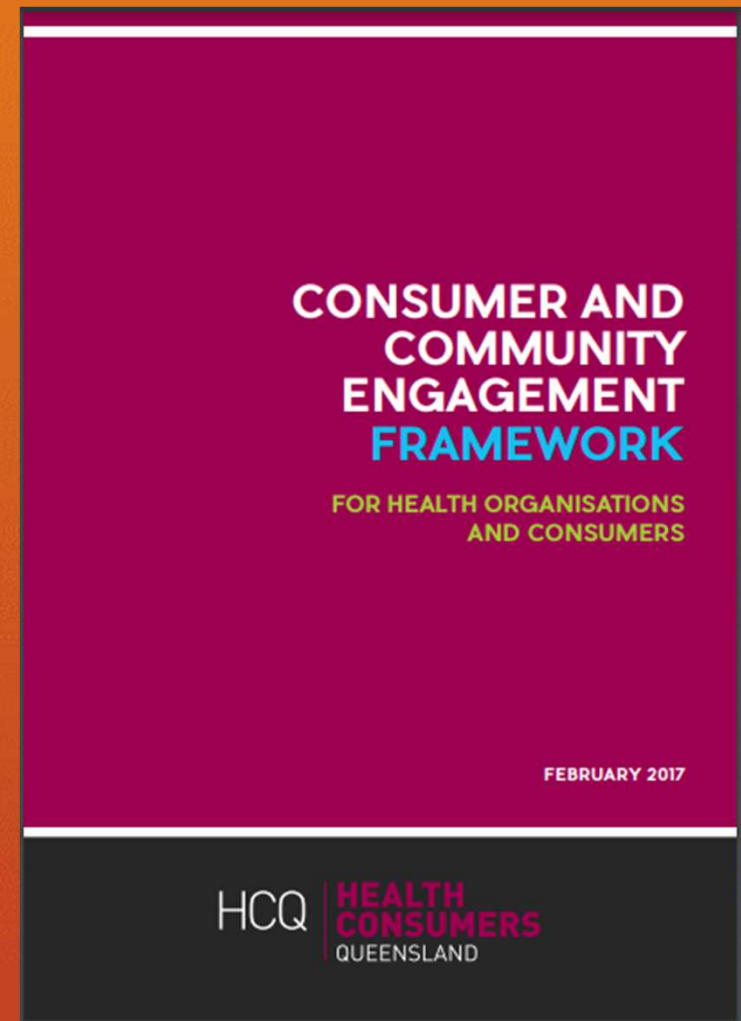
Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care

- **Aim:** to create health service organisations with mutually beneficial outcomes
- **consumers** as partners in
  - planning,
  - design,
  - delivery,
  - measurement and
  - evaluation of systems and services
- **patients** as partners in their own care, *to the extent that they choose.*



Providing an explanation of

- what consumer & Community engagement is
- When & where it can take place
- Why it should be done
- What consumers can expect from engaging with health services





# Kitchen Table Discussions

- Facilitated by trained consumer hosts
- Held at “the kitchen table”
- Health Service staff/consultants are not in attendance- community speaks openly
- Removes power imbalance
- Ensure community views are heard accurately & clearly
- reaching hard to reach & disadvantaged
- Participants enjoy the process – ask for more
- Provide valuable stories & comments
- Can increase consumer knowledge & awareness /health literacy

<https://www.hcq.org.au/kitchentablediscussions/>





"Thank you, it is awesome and  
helps to confirm that our  
voices makes a difference."

*Kitchen Table Discussion Host*





# Consumer Engagement in Indigenous Health



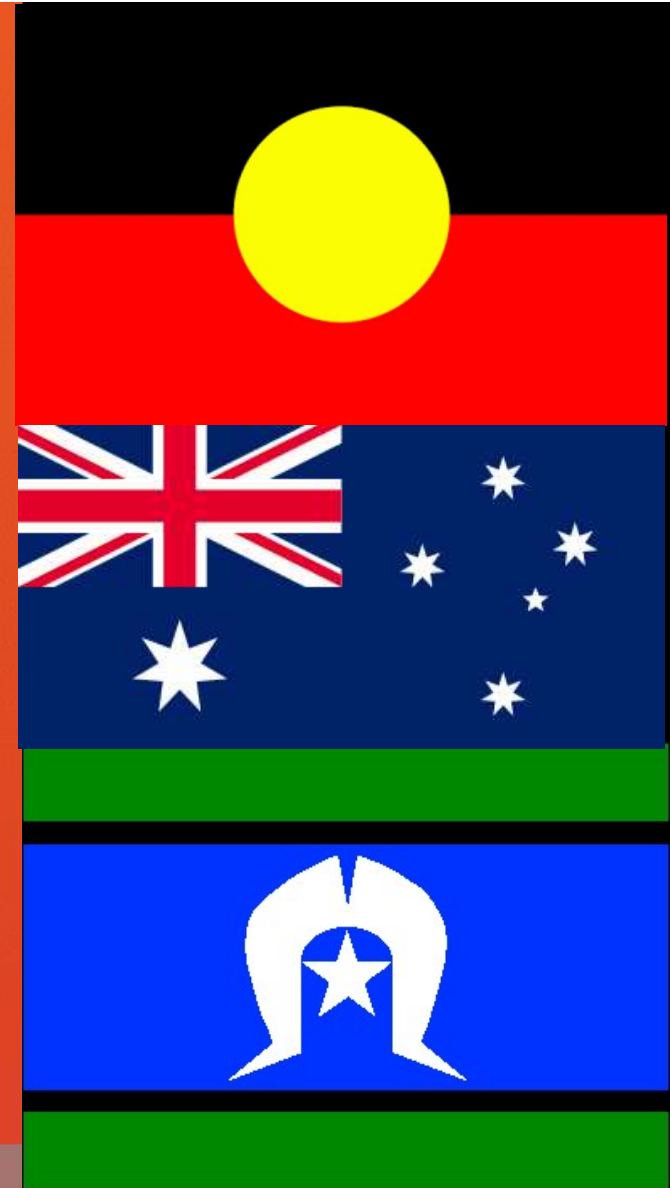
# First Nations Australians' Health & Wellbeing

- More than individual physical wellness
- Social, emotional, & cultural well-being of whole Community
- Individuals achieving full human potential
- Creating total well-being of their community
- Whole of life view
- Includes the of life-death-life cycle



## Tackling institutionalised racism & cultural disempowerment

- Cultural Safety
- Cultural respect
- self-determination
- Co-design
- Co-decision
- “Nothing about us without us”
- Yarning







## Yarning Circles



# Thursday Island Midwifery Group Practice

Co-designed with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community  
Continuity of care in a culturally safe manner

Significant reduction in

- Antenatal smoking
- Preterm birth
- Incidence of low & very low weight births

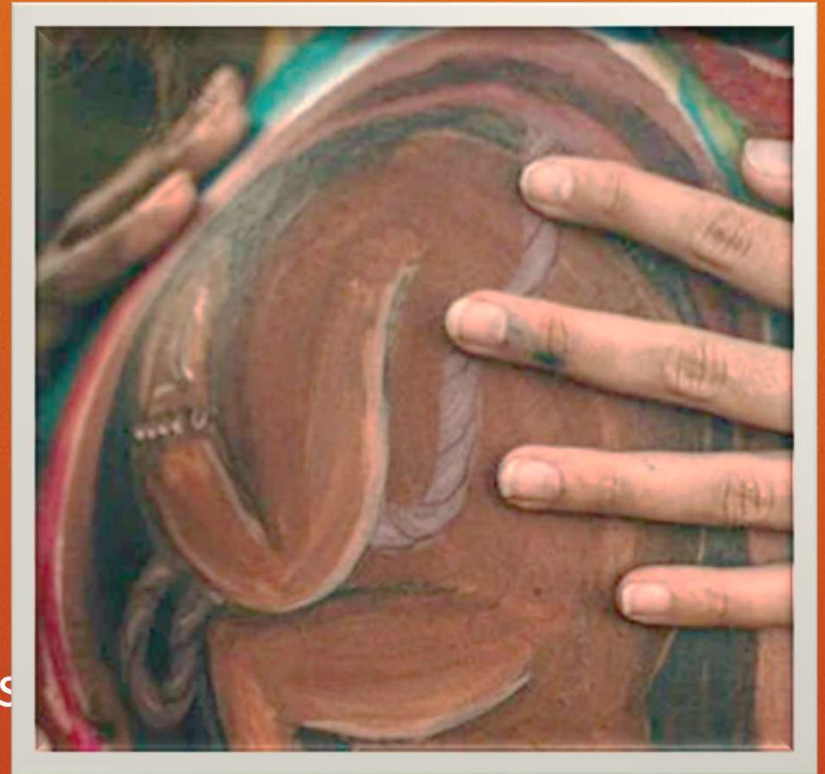


Image : Bobbi Lockyer <https://www.bobbilockyer.com/>

## Summary:

- The role of the National Rural Health Commissioner
- Consumer Engagement:
  - Consumer voice and representation
  - Empowering First Nation People & amplifying their voices
- Impact of consumer Engagement





Australian Government

National Rural Health Commissioner

**Thank you**