



# Consumer Representation Training Participant Workbook

Presented by the  
ACT Mental  
Health Consumer  
Network



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**This workshop was developed in consultation with consumers, and information from the following resources:**

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*ACT Charter of Rights for People Who Experience Mental Health Issues (2011)*  
*A Framework for Action (2007)*

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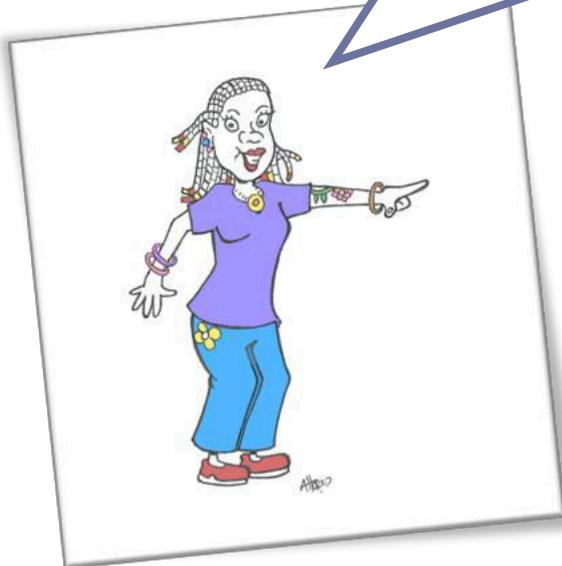
*Experts by Experience (2009)*

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# Course Contents

Throughout this course you will notice speech bubbles similar to this one.

They contain comments from Network members and others about Self-Advocacy and Consumer Representation related issues.



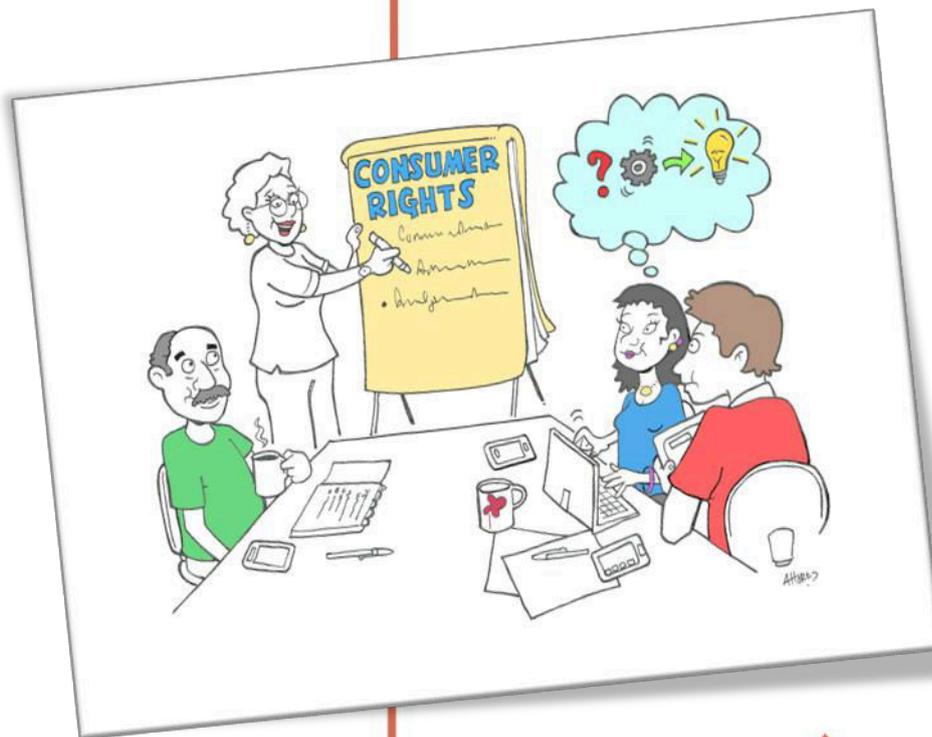
## Welcome to the Network's Consumer Representation Training!

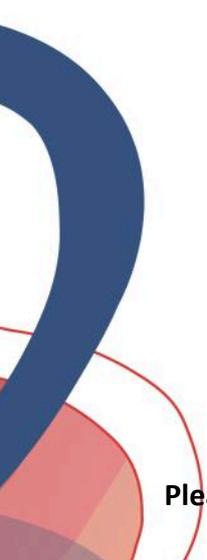
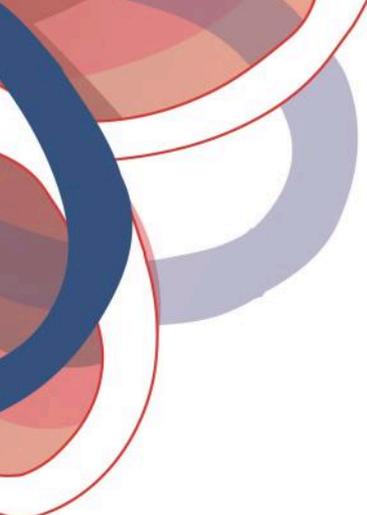
The objective of this training is for mental health consumers to become informed and confident Consumer Representatives, equipping them with the skills to represent themselves and other consumers.

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# Module 1: Introduction to Consumer Representation





# Introduction to Consumer Representation

## Objective:

To have an introduction to the Consumer Movement and how it links into Recovery. To learn about systemic advocacy and consumer representation in the ACT.

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## Resources/Handouts:

Handout 01 - Changing perspectives on consumer involvement in MH

Handout 02 - Experts by Experience - Extracts

Handout 03 - A framework for Action - Extracts

Handout 04 - MH Recovery in the ACT

Handout 05 - Consumer and Carer and Practitioner Guides to Recovery Principles

## References and Further Reading:

National framework for recovery-oriented mental health services—Guide and resources: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/a-national-framework-for-recovery-oriented-mental-health-services-guide-for-practitioners-and-providers>

Mary O'Hagan 1 workshop Psykiatritopmøde 2012: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CvhHKEw40xM>

Self Labelling and Identity: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pxbw7dDMX60>

Recovery: <http://www.recoverystories.info/what-does-a-person-need-in-their-environment-in-order-to-recover-by-mark-ragins/>

National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum: [nmhccf.org.au](http://nmhccf.org.au)

<http://www.ourconsumerplace.com.au>

# Types of Advocacy

My voice, my choice, my life, my rights, my empowerment.



## Individual Advocacy

Individual Advocacy is having someone to stand beside you if you think something is unfair or that someone is treating you badly and you would like to do something about it.

## Self-Advocacy

Self-Advocacy is the action of representing oneself or one's views or interests.



## Systemic Advocacy

Systemic Advocacy works to change the situations of a whole group of people who share a similar issue or who want to change the service provided by a system. Systemic Advocacy encourages changes to the law, government services, community services and community attitudes.

It is "... the process of advocating for change in the systems that guide the delivery of mental health services in the ACT. Consumer Representatives can use their understanding of these systems, their own lived experience and the lived experience of others to inform their approach in advocating for change."

ACT Mental Health Consumer Network, <https://www.actmhcn.org.au/consumer-representative-program/>

## Consumer Advocacy

Consumer advocacy aims to support health consumers, and ensure that their rights are protected and improved.

<http://www.healthinsite.gov.au/> <https://www.hcnsw.org.au/consumers-toolkit/the-role-of-health-consumer-representatives/>

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# What is....?

My expressed wishes are important and should be respected.



I choose to take responsibility for asserting my rights and in the rights of others.

## ... a Mental Health Consumer?

A person who has a lived experience of mental illness.

Consumer Representation is not just about advocating for me and my needs, it's about advocating for things that affect lots of different people. And it's important because we can change things that are hurting us, we can change things that aren't happening for us that we need to have happen. And we can have our voice heard as policy happens, as legislation is developed and to make sure that the systems that are around us actually support us.

## ...Consumer Representation?

A consumer representative is a member of a government, professional body, industry or non-governmental organisation committee who voices consumer perspectives and takes part in the decision-making process on behalf of consumers. This person is nominated by, and is accountable to, an organisation of consumers.

*Consumer Health Forum of Australia*

A Consumer Representative of the ACT Mental Health Consumer Network is supported to represent the broader consumer voice through participation on committees of government and other non-government organisations.

## ...Consumer and Carer participation?

“participation by consumers and carers in formal or informal planning, delivery, implementation, and evaluation of all activities associated with mental health services (voluntary or paid), as well as in all processes which effect[sic] the lives of consumers and carers, through sharing of information, opinions, and decision making power.”

*National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum*

### For more information:

The consumer and carer movement: <https://mymentalhealth.org.au/consumers-and-carers/further-information-about-the-consumer-movement>

# What is the aim of Consumer Representation?

- Improve the quality of service delivery, through consumer involvement in the development, implementation, and evaluation of services.
- Increase the satisfaction of consumers using mental health and other services.
- Change community and service attitudes towards people affected by mental illness.
- Create more equity in the relationships between mental health services and consumers.
- To voice consumer perspectives, and take part in the decision-making process, on behalf of other consumers.



Consumer Representation is important because it brings the lived experience to the table.

As a rep you can start identifying where some of the gaps in service are, where things could be done better, and trying to change the mindset of some of the policy makers and decision makers that you'll come into contact with.

## Representation Principles

- Representation is about expressing the perspectives of consumers, in a range of situations, such as committees and consultations.
- All consumers have the right to have their views represented, and ought to have opportunities to do so, in a way that is timely and meaningful.

Historically, services and programs that treat, care or assist people with experience of mental health problems (consumers) have been designed by clinicians and administrators. Consumers and their carers have had little opportunity to provide input. Service users have a unique perspective and their 'customer feedback' can create more responsive and higher quality services.

*NMHCCF Advocacy Brief—Consumer and Carer Participation – Key Issues and Benefits*

- Representation requires communication between representatives and other consumers, so that representatives can legitimately access consumer views, and speak on their behalf.
- If consumers hold a broad range of views, it is important that these are accurately reflected by representatives who are acting on consumers' behalf.
- Consumer representatives have the core responsibility to act ethically in all of their representative duties.

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# What is the ACT Mental Health Consumer Network?

The ACT Mental Health Consumer Network is an organisation that is run by consumers for consumers. Our aim is to bring about a higher standard of health care in the mental health sector through representation, lobbying and active involvement in new developments in the mental health sector.

In **1997** a number of consumers decided to form a Consumer Group after attending a consumer representation workshop sponsored by the Mental Health Foundation. A committee was formed and meetings were held monthly.

How the Network came into being was basically a group of people that wanted change.

The Network lobbied for a 'Clubhouse' model in its earlier days; a consumer space where mental health consumers could access and share resources. With the commencement of The Rainbow, the Network's focus shifted to consumer representation.

In **2005** the Network decided to work toward a broader understanding of representation and adopted principles of **systems advocacy**.

From then onwards the Network worked towards building a sustainable foundation for consumer advocacy in the ACT. **The Consumer Representative Program (CRP)** – the Network's core activity – has continued to grow and expand, as have the Network's other activities.

## Our Aims as an Organisation are:

**For more information check out:**

[www.actmhcn.org.au/foundation-documents/](http://www.actmhcn.org.au/foundation-documents/)  
[www.actmhcn.org.au/submissions/](http://www.actmhcn.org.au/submissions/)

- To accurately represent the interests of mental health consumers to service providers, community and government at all levels.
- To facilitate meaningful communication between mental health service providers, carers and consumers.
- To increase mental health literacy amongst consumers and service providers through participation and education.
- To give a voice to ACT mental health consumers through lobbying, education and representation.

## What Do We Do?

We represent consumers, bringing their voices to professionals by:

- Participating on committees.
- Participating in and assisting with research programs.
- Lobbying the government and mental health service providers.
- Facilitating education programs for professionals

### The Network's vision as expressed in the current strategic plan :

**Vision** A community of connected voices achieving positive change.

**Statement of Purpose** To advocate all means to improve and enhance systems, services and practices for consumers in the ACT by:

- Discovering and promoting the collective voice
- Facilitating and supporting consumer participation at all levels of decision-making
- Ensuring a commitment to consumer-driven recovery.

### Values

Empowerment  
Respect  
Courage  
Social justice  
Meaningful inclusion

**Guiding Principles** Our guiding principles reflect our values of empowerment, respect, courage, social justice; and meaningful inclusion. They reflect what Board, members and staff expect of each other in their work together and how we work with others in our representative, advocacy and collaborative capacities.

Value of lived experience  
Open dialogue and advocacy  
Increased self-awareness  
Consumer-driven recovery  
Ensure social justice and human rights are upheld  
Sense of community

People with mental health issues have been standing up and saying 'It's time that you listened to us, because we know what's best for us'.



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**What would you change about how the mental health system works in the ACT?**

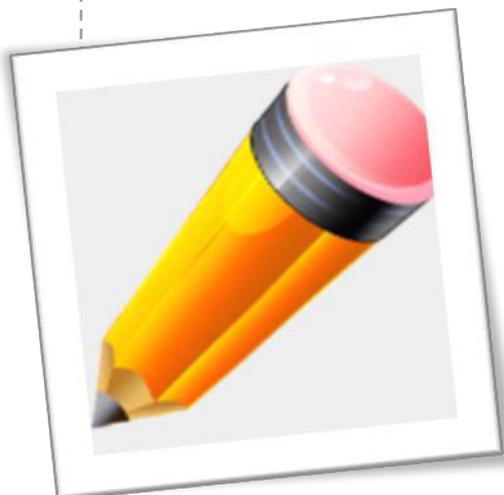
# Video Notes: Introduction to Consumer Representation

Watch the video and consider the following:

- Why is the consumer perspective important when developing services?

Take note of any points you find interesting.

You will get to help develop policy that will affect people in the future. You will get to have a say about things that are happening now... you will get to discuss new improvements... if you want to have a say in the ground level, then this is the job for you.



Video: ACTMHCN Consumer Representative Program Training,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=elgsgVjc520>

# Video Notes: Historical Aspect of the Consumer Movement

Watch the video and consider the following:

- Why is it important for consumers to have their story heard?
- How is the consumer perspective different from the traditional history of psychiatry? Does that make a difference?

Take note of any points you find interesting



Video: Introducing Mad People's History,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AKBFYi6A6pA&t=8s>

## The Development of the Consumer Movement

Watch the video and take note of any points you find interesting.

This video is about the consumer movement in Canada. How similar/different do you think the situation is in Australia?



For an Australian perspective, see these articles:

*Handout 01: Changing perspectives on consumer involvement in MH*

*Handout 02: Experts by Experience - Extracts*

Video: Presenting the consumer/survivor/ex-patient movement  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9uTbEBPkAAk&t=3s>

# Video Notes: Why Consumer Representation?

Watch the video and consider the following:

- Why is it important to have the consumer perspective when developing services?
- What is the benefit of consumer representation – to the individual? To the system?
- What are some ways that the consumer movement works to make systemic change?

Take note of any points you find interesting



To find out more about Consumer Participation in MH services in the ACT, check out:  
*Handout 03: A framework for Action - Extracts*

CRP Video “ Why Consumer Representation?”

# What people think about Consumer Representation

Change takes forever. And just when I think 'I can't do this anymore', something will happen and change will come in, and I think 'Wow, it was worth it'.

Consumer Representation helps with destigmatisation of mental illness because having someone who's had the lived experience of mental illness positively involved in the development of services I think is an important thing.

I think we actually break down stigma within the system while being on those committees.

## What I think:

It's really important to me that I know I am making a difference. And I know that change happens very slowly, especially in mental health, but just knowing that that change does happen, I've seen it happen, and it will continue to happen as a result of my contribution is really, really rewarding for me

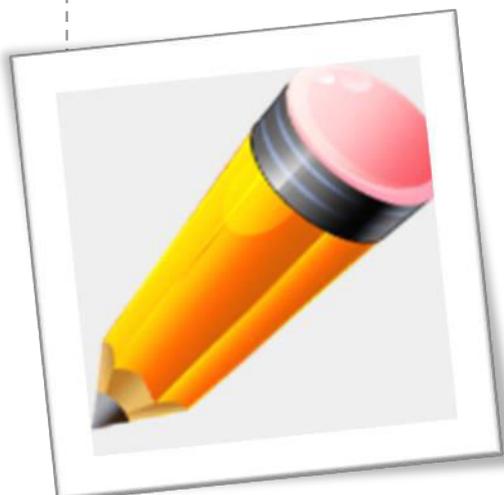
Consumer Representation is not just about advocating for me and my needs, it's about advocating for things that affect lots of different people. And it's important because we can change things that are hurting us, we can change things that aren't happening for us that we need to have happen. And we can have our voice heard as policy happens, as legislation is developed and to make sure that the systems that are around us actually support us.

# Video Notes: Recovery and the Consumer Movement

Watch the video and consider:

- What is recovery? Why is it important?
- How does recovery fit in with consumer representation?

Take note of any points you find interesting:



To find out more about the Australian National Framework for Recovery-Oriented Mental Health Services, and Recovery in the ACT, read the following:

*Handout 04: MH Recovery in the ACT*

*Handout 05: Consumer and Carer and Practitioner Guides to Recovery Principles*

Video: What does the recovery model look like today?  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_2SDbSuX3kQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_2SDbSuX3kQ)

# National Framework for Recovery Oriented Mental Health Services

*The National framework for recovery-oriented mental health services provides guidance to mental health practitioners and services on recovery-oriented practice and service delivery.*

*It defines personal recovery as 'being able to create and live a meaningful and contributing life in a community of choice, with or without the presence of mental health issues.'*



Image courtesy of Stuart Miles at FreeDigitalPhotos.net

It's development is underpinned by extensive research and consultation, as well as being informed by lived experience.

The guide and the additional resources can be accessed online at the Department of Health website (see references at the start of this module)

Resources with 'reflective questions' provide consumers and carers with a recovery principles approach to ensure that mental health services facilitate their recovery journey.

## **Recovery-oriented practice encapsulates mental health care that:**

- recognises and embraces the possibilities for recovery and wellbeing created by the inherent strength and capacity of all people experiencing mental health issues
- maximises self-determination and self-management of mental health and wellbeing
- assists families to understand the challenges and opportunities arising from their family member's experiences.

# Recovery and Consumer Representation

Factors that are involved in the recovery journey:

How does Consumer Representation fit into this picture?



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## HOPE

<b>Self-Belief</b>	Emotional growth, confidence, now internalised stigma
<b>Resourcefulness</b>	Learning, choices, self-management, determination
<b>Relationships</b>	Respectful, strengths based, supportive, reciprocal
<b>Income</b>	Cover basic living needs, housing, transport
<b>Contribution</b>	Work, education, leisure
<b>Transition</b>	Circumstances, places, identity
<b>Treatments</b>	Medication can help or hinder

For more information check out:

Mary O'Hagan's Denmark workshop 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CvhHKEw40xM>

Recovery Stories: <https://www.recoverystories.info/category/film/>

Think about what you learned about Consumer Representation in this module.

What did you enjoy the most? Find most useful? Practical?

What are some Consumer issues/areas that are of interest to you?

**Something I want to take away from this module:**



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**To find out more about the consumer perspective check out:**

<http://www.ourconsumerplace.com.au>

Our Consumer Place is a resource centre run entirely by people diagnosed with "mental illness" that provides information, training, support and advice to consumer-developed groups and projects.

