

Consumer Advisory Group (CAG)

Terms of Reference

Think Community Services (TCS)

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Think Mental Health acknowledge the Traditional custodians on the land on which we live and work, and of the many different nations across the wider regions from which we all come. In Canberra this is the Ngunnawal people. We pay our respects to the Elders past, present and emerging as the holders of the memories, the traditions, the culture and the spiritual wellbeing of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the nation.

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1.0 Purpose

These Terms of Reference establish the mission, authority, membership, functions, and accountability of the Consumer Advisory Group (CAG) of Think Community Services (TCS). The CAG is a formal governance mechanism through which consumers, carers, and people with lived experience of mental health challenges contribute to the governance, service design, and quality improvement of TCS services.

The CAG embodies TCS's commitment to genuine partnership with consumers at every level of the organisation. CAG recommendations are formally received by the Quality Improvement Committee (QIC) and ensuring that lived experience directly informs governance, service design, and continuous improvement. This obligation applies equally across all TCS programs and service channels.

2.0 Mission

To provide a pathway for consumer input into ongoing operations and development at the Think Community Service program (the Service). In particular, monitoring and review of the Centre's consumer centred care approach (see Figure 1 below).

This will help us to maintain our commitment to:

1. Embed the voice of service users as part of the continuous improvement process,
2. Improve consumer confidence in, and engagement with, our services,
3. Encourage direct consumer input into services offered within the centre and into the operations of the service.

Figure 1: Think Community Services' commitment to consumer centred care.



3.0 Values

This Service is a part of Think Community Services, delivered by Think Mental Health (the agency). The Centre values include:

- Compassion
- Inclusiveness
- Passion
- Respect
- Leadership

With certain values particularly relevant to this advisory group.

4.0 Functions

- Providing formal advice to the QIC on consumer experience, service quality, and improvement priorities across all programs
- Reviewing consumer-facing materials, including complaint forms, feedback mechanisms, health literacy resources, and service information
- Contributing lived experience perspectives to service design and model of care reviews
- Participating in co-design activities for new or changed services
- Monitoring how TCS responds to consumer feedback and whether improvement actions are implemented
- Advising on accessibility, inclusivity, and cultural safety of TCS services for diverse consumer groups
- Providing input into quality improvement priorities particularly those arising from consumer experience data

5.0 Membership

Consumers have the opportunity to nominate for the Consumer Advisory Group (CAG) as part of completing the YES PHN (Your Experience of Service) survey, at the conclusion of their involvement with the Service. Anyone who nominates via this process will be invited to participate, and they can self-select to join the CAG and attend scheduled meetings. The CAG will include one Service representative (Centre Manager or delegate) who will participate in discussions and can take matters back to the Senior Management Committee (SMC). In addition, the Service's peer worker will attend meetings in a support role. The Service will also provide secretariat support, though this person is not an active member of the advisory group.

The CAG will appoint a group leader from the membership. The leader will be responsible for chairing the meetings and liaising directly with the Service delegate as necessary.

A member, can at any time, withdraw from participation in the CAG. At the time of withdrawal, the member will be invited to provide feedback on their experience. A member can remain part of the CAG as long as they wish on the provision that participation remains constructive and respectful to all.

If the Service or CAG are concerned about a member's attendance or their participation is no longer constructive, the group leader will raise this with the Service delegate to ensure the member is aware of the concerns and supported whenever possible to resolve any difficulties and re-engage with CAG in a productive manner. If this is not possible, a member may be asked to withdraw from the group. If a member does not attend four consecutive scheduled meetings without an apology, they are likely to be considered withdrawn from CAG membership.

6.0 Meetings

Meetings will be scheduled and held quarterly, with at least 14 days' notice provided. Meetings will be held onsite at Service or an alternate venue if deemed suitable. Duration of meetings will not exceed 1.5 hours. A meeting agenda will be circulated by the Service no less than 7 days prior to the scheduled meeting.

7.0 Reimbursement for Attendance

TCS recognises the time and expertise consumer members contribute to governance. Consumers who attend meetings will receive nominal reimbursement for the costs associated with giving their time to the group including travel, childcare or other reasonable costs.

8.0 Reporting

The CAG's formal recommendation process is the primary mechanism through which consumer voices influence TCS governance. CAG recommendations are formally recorded in the minutes of each meeting and provided to the QIC and SMC.

9.0 Grievance Procedure

CAG members have the right to make a complaint in relation to the activities and operation of the group. The Service will address any such complaints in a fair, reasonable and prompt manner, in line with the Service's Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions Policy. A complaint may be made in writing or in person. The first point of contact should be the Centre Manager. The Regional Manager and/or Clinical, Quality and Strategy Director of the agency will then be involved, if required, before engaging in a formal grievance procedure.

10.0 Review of Terms of Reference

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed as part of the standard three-year cycle review or sooner if necessary. Review will be by the Committee and approved by the Directors to ensure continued relevance and alignment with governance and regulatory requirements. Consumer members are consulted in the review process. The next review date is recorded in Document Register.