

# Introduction



**This Kit is intended for organisations providing services** to people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or experiencing housing disadvantage. It contains information on ways to engage with service users, to listen to their views, and to develop strategies based on their advice with the aim of improving services.

Considerable work has been done over the past ten years in the health and mental health sectors on consumer participation (CP). As a result there are easily available resources—from Australia and overseas—to involve consumers of health and mental health services in the running and improvement of those services. However there is relatively little available on consumer participation in housing.

This Kit is focused on housing and homelessness services and this differentiates it from other available resources.

The information in this Kit is not intended to be exhaustive. This Kit offers a starting point for organisations looking to develop consumer participation strategies, and provides references to printed and web resources when greater detail is required.

## Who the Kit is for

This Kit is primarily intended for staff working in housing and homelessness services, especially those with responsibility for designing and implementing consumer participation strategies within those organisations. It has been designed to be used as a resource, with information that will support staff to make decisions about how to plan, implement and evaluate CP activities within their organisations.

## What the Kit contains

Information in this Kit is presented on self-contained information sheets, colour-coded and organised within four main sections:

### Section 1 (green)

Introduction, definitions, frameworks, context

### Section 2 (blue)

Planning, implementing and evaluating consumer participation

### Section 3 (cream)

Consumer participation strategies

### Section 4 (white)

Resources

There are numerous strategies which may enable consumers to participate at different levels in organi-

sations: over forty are mentioned in this Kit. Twelve strategies are discussed in detail in Section 3; these were selected based on consumer and service provider input.

The Resources section includes examples of consumer participation survey tools, policies, strategies and terms of reference from a variety of agencies. In addition, the Kit includes two PowerPoint presentations developed to guide the Consumer Participation Resource Kit focus group discussions, and now made available to use (and adapt and improve) in discussions with consumers and staff.

Printed copies of the Kit include a CD-Rom with electronic copies of the information sheets and resources.

While the information in this Kit may be helpful in determining the participation strategies you choose, you are encouraged to undertake further research to make the results of the implementation more successful. This is especially the case if you (or your organisation) have relatively little experience with the strategies being used or with CP in general. To assist you, references are included as endnotes on the information sheets, and the Resources section contains a selected bibliography.



## How the Kit was developed

The directions, factors and considerations surrounding consumer participation presented in this Kit are drawn from a review of literature available online (using consumer participation as key words in the search) and on models in use in Australia and overseas. Consultation with consumers, consumer advocates, service providers and others with experience in the area informed and guided the direction taken and the strategies presented.

The views and opinions of both consumers of and people providing homelessness assistance were gathered during a series of focus groups as well as individual discussions. Two focus groups were held with staff of housing/homelessness organisations, and two with consumers (one each metropolitan and non-metropolitan). The results of consultation and research were combined in drafting the Kit. Drafts of the Kit were circulated to relevant stakeholders for comment prior to production of the final version.

## Credits and acknowledgements

### Auspicing organisations

Rural Housing Network Ltd (RHNL) and HomeGround Services.

### Research, consultation and writing of Kit

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## About the auspicating agencies

### HomeGround Services

HomeGround is one of Melbourne's largest housing and homelessness organisations. HomeGround's vision is to end homelessness in Melbourne and the organisation's mission is to get people housed and to keep people housed. HomeGround provides a range of services including intensive outreach support to

homeless people; assistance for families and individuals in crisis; supports to help people stay housed after an experience of homelessness; transitional housing services; emergency material aid, and community development initiatives. HomeGround also forms strategic partnerships for social change and conducts community awareness campaigns. HomeGround works in partnership with other individuals and organisations in the provision of services, in research and advocacy. HomeGround is independent, not-for-profit and secular. For more information: <http://www.homeground.org.au>

### Rural Housing Network Ltd

Rural Housing Network Ltd is an organisation with a commitment to addressing housing affordability, tackling homelessness, and fostering housing stability, known for a progressive and compassionate approach to working with people experiencing homelessness and housing disadvantage. RHNL is the largest social and community housing organisation within the Hume region of Victoria. For more information: <http://www.ruralhousing.com.au>

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Copyright in the sample policies and other documents in the Resources section is held by the organisations that wrote these documents. Permission should be sought from the relevant organisation(s) prior to reproducing these documents.

## Where to obtain the Kit

The Consumer Participation Resource Kit is available online at: <http://cpkit.chp.org.au>

A limited number of printed copies of the Kit will be distributed by:

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