

# Partnering with Consumers Case Study: St Vincent’s Private Hospitals, Brisbane and Northside

## Person-centred approaches and consumer partnerships

Person-centred approaches and strong consumer partnerships are critical for delivering care that meets people’s needs, achieving better health outcomes for communities and ensuring better value for health services. They also underpin the Partnering with Consumers Standard of the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards. However, each health service organisation is on its own journey and must determine what strategies work best for their local communities and service delivery contexts.

This case study is one of eight, designed to assist other health services working to embed person-centred care. It highlights the person-centred approaches and strategies that St Vincent’s Private Hospitals, Brisbane and Northside, use to partner with consumers, including:

- A.** Aligning the importance of partnering with consumers with the broader St Vincent’s mission, vision, goals and culture
- B.** Partnering with consumers to create an environment that is warm, friendly and welcoming
- C.** Engaging consumers in research governance and sharing research results
- D.** Building systems and processes to engage consumer representatives in strategic planning and service design
- E.** Using electronic systems to support partnering with consumers
- F.** Sharing approaches to partnering with consumers with other health organisations.

These themes and good practice examples have been aligned with the four criteria of the Partnering with Consumers Standard, and the seven attributes of high-performing person-centred healthcare organisations (the attributes), which are detailed below.






### Partnering with Consumers Standard criteria

- 1** Clinical governance and quality improvement systems to support partnering with consumers
- 2** Partnering with patients in their own care
- 3** Health literacy
- 4** Partnering with consumers in organisational design and governance

### Seven attributes of high-performing person-centred healthcare organisations



## Snapshot of St Vincent’s Private Hospitals, Brisbane and Northside

Where	What	Whom
 <p>2 private, Catholic, not-for-profit hospitals</p> <p>1 is in inner-city Brisbane, the other is in northern Brisbane</p> <p>Part of the St Vincent’s Australia Group</p>	 <p>Nearly 400 beds across the 2 hospitals</p> <p>Focus on supporting disadvantaged communities</p> <p>Specialise in general medicine, geriatric medicine, rehabilitation, pain management and palliative care</p>	 <p>Have an increasingly diverse community, in particular, diverse cultural backgrounds</p>

### Overview

St Vincent’s Private Hospitals, Brisbane and Northside, focus on providing specialised care to their culturally diverse consumer base. Partnering with consumers is embedded in the mission and values of the two hospitals. This has led to a culture where the whole workforce knows it is responsible for delivering person-centred care. This is supported through consumer engagement on governance committees, and a set of policies, tools and templates. The hospitals have also placed great emphasis on creating friendly and welcoming environments through art and music programs.

### A. Aligning the importance of partnering with consumers with the broader St Vincent’s mission, vision, goals and culture

<p><b>Criterion</b></p>  <p>Clinical governance and quality improvement systems to support partnering with consumers</p>	<p><b>Attribute</b></p>  <p>Purpose, strategy and leadership</p>
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St Vincent’s has a clearly defined mission statement. It is committed to providing care and support to those in need, particularly the poor and vulnerable. The organisation is driven by values of compassion, justice, integrity and excellence.

Executive team members and clinicians see a clear connection between these mission and values, and the organisation’s commitment to partnering with consumers. This is reflected in the orientation and training provided to the workforce:

“  
 It’s about living our values, and it’s driven from the top. Partnering with consumers has been a priority for us for so long now; it’s just a part of what we do.  
 – Clinical representative

- St Vincent’s Service Excellence program provides training on core service principles, including customer service and ways that the workforce can and should partner with patients in their care (Box 1)
- Orientation focuses on St Vincent’s mission and placing patients at the centre of all work.

**Box 1: Demonstrating how to partner with patients in their care through the Service Excellence program**

The Service Excellence program reminds the workforce that small things can make a big difference when partnering with consumers. The workforce is expected to:

- Use the patient, family member or carer’s name when having a conversation or completing handover
- Routinely check in with patients, family members and carers to ensure they have understood information provided to them, and offer them the opportunity to ask questions
- Look for anyone who appears lost, ask if they need help and make sure they know where they are going.

St Vincent’s emphasises that all staff are responsible for partnering with consumers and delivering person-centred care. Members of the corporate and non-clinical workforce, like those in hospitality or food services, are encouraged to check in with patients, ask if they have any questions or concerns, and raise these with the clinicians.

Partnering with consumers is supported through systems, processes and tools. For example, the Visits with Purpose log (Figure 1) is used when the workforce conducts routine clinical assessments. It reminds the workforce that, along with routine tasks such as taking observations and providing medicines, it should check in with the patient on issues like ongoing pain or personal needs. The log, which forms part of the patient record, also reminds the workforce to ask ‘Is there anything else I can do for you?’ before they leave the room.

**Figure 1: Visits with Purpose log**



<b>VISITS WITH PURPOSE BEHAVIOUR</b>	
<b>PERFORM SCHEDULED TASKS</b> – Observations, Medications, ADLs, etc.	
<b>AND</b>	
<b>PAIN</b>	Is the patient comfortable, do they have pain Document using the pain scale if appropriate
<b>PERSONAL NEEDS</b>	Does patient need a pan or assistance to the bathroom
<b>PLACEMENT</b>	Check items are within reach
<b>POSITION</b>	Is it time for the patient to change position
<b>PUMPS</b>	Check all equipment associated with patient



**Our mission makes it clear: we’re here to serve. That means that we place our patients, their families and carers at the centre of everything that we do. We’re here for them.**

– Executive team member

## B. Partnering with consumers to create an environment that is warm, friendly and welcoming

<p><b>Criterion</b></p> <p> Partnering with consumers in organisational design and governance</p>	<p><b>Attribute</b></p> <p> Technology and the built environment</p>
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St Vincent’s has emphasised working with patients to build an environment that is warm, friendly, welcoming

and conducive to best care. This has resulted in many programs that improve the patient experience (Table 1).

**Table 1: St Vincent’s programs**

Program	Description
Arts program	<p>The arts program is designed to provide a diversion from day-to-day hospital life. The program supplies people with experiences that enhance their hospital stay and support spiritual, emotional and physical health and wellbeing. The program includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Art exhibitions like Outside In, a yearly event that meets the organisation’s vision to provide people in care with a connection to the outside world</li> <li>■ An art-lending library that lets patients choose visual artwork to hang in their rooms during their stay</li> <li>■ Art workshops, held weekly by a professional artist, that let patients leave their rooms to create, engage and connect with others</li> <li>■ An art trolley that circulates weekly throughout the hospital, filled with resources to encourage skill development, and personal and creative exploration</li> <li>■ Instructional ballet videos, made in partnership with the Queensland Ballet and tailored to the hospital environment, that patients can work through at their own pace.</li> </ul>
Music program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Local musicians are invited to perform in public spaces within the hospital.</li> <li>■ Clinicians make personalised playlists for people living with dementia, highlighting songs they may have heard when they were younger.</li> </ul>
Pets program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Patients are allowed to bring their pets into the hospital for visits, as this creates a positive environment and supports clinical care.</li> </ul>

## C. Engaging consumers in research governance and sharing research results

<b>Criterion</b>  Clinical governance and quality improvement systems to support partnering with consumers	<b>Attribute</b>  Governance
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St Vincent’s partners with universities and health service organisations to research a range of areas.



Consumers are actively engaged in research governance processes. There is at least one consumer representative that sits on the St Vincent’s Human Research Ethics Committee. The consumer representatives give valuable input on informed consent and participant information sheets. They also provide a community perspective on research design, methods and data use. Consumer representatives are provided training to support them in their role.

A key part of research is ensuring that results are made available, particularly to study participants. Consumer representatives on research committees make sure that patients can easily access and understand research results. One way of doing this is through communication boards in wards. These let the workforce share information about current research with patients.

“  
 What we focus on is making sure research is able to be understood by people participating in it.  
 – Consumer representative

“  
 Our consumer representatives ask those really important questions, like ‘Why are you collecting this or that data? Do you really need it? What are you planning on doing with it later?’  
 – Clinician

## D. Building systems and processes to engage consumer representatives in strategic planning and service design

<b>Criterion</b>  Partnering with consumers in organisational design and governance	<b>Attribute</b>  Governance
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St Vincent’s has an organisational commitment to person-centred care. This is documented in the Partnering with Consumers policy, which is designed to ensure that ‘all staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities in providing a health service that is responsive to patient, carer and consumer input and needs’.

The organisation has a strong tradition of partnering with consumer representatives. However, they acknowledge that this has been difficult, most recently because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Formal consumer representatives are engaged in many ways, including through:

- Being members on key governance committees including the Clinical Management Committee
- Reviewing safety and quality data provided as part of the organisational scorecard, which gives a high-level overview of organisational performance against key metrics
- Providing input into the development of patient stories, which provide a patient voice during meetings, including board meetings
- Visiting individual wards to share their stories with the workforce
- Participating in the complaints review process.

St Vincent’s makes a concerted effort to support consumer representatives. The hospitals empower consumers to contribute to strategic planning and service design in a meaningful way. This includes:

- Matching consumer representatives with governance committees based on their skills, experience and interests
- Formally briefing consumer representatives before and after committee meetings so they fully

understand the issues and data to be discussed, and to give them an opportunity to ask questions or clarify anything

- Inviting consumer representatives to complete specific tasks that take advantage of their skills. For example, a consumer representative with a background in health literacy provides extensive input into the review of brochures and other patient-facing material.

## E. Using electronic systems to support partnering with consumers



<p><b>Criterion</b></p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <p><b>Partnering with patients in their own care</b></p> </div>	<p><b>Attribute</b></p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <p><b>Technology and the built environment</b></p> </div>
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St Vincent’s Private Hospitals, Brisbane and Northside, have recently improved their use of electronic systems to support partnering with consumers and delivery of person-centred care. Examples include:

- Enabling patients to enter information, like their preferred name, into the e-admission portal before arriving at hospital

- Working with patients in the rehabilitation ward to document goals in their own words, which are often different to the treatment goals that clinicians identify. These goals are agreed on and entered into the electronic healthcare record so that the workforce is aware of what is important for patients and what they are trying to achieve.

## F. Sharing approaches to partnering with consumers with other health organisations

<p><b>Criterion</b></p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <p><b>Clinical governance and quality improvement systems to support partnering with consumers</b></p> </div>	<p><b>Attribute</b></p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <p><b>Partnerships</b></p> </div>
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St Vincent’s Health Australia operates six public hospitals, 10 private hospitals and 20 aged care homes across Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. The many committees and networks across these facilities can share best-practice for partnering with consumers and lessons learned.

St Vincent’s Private Hospitals, Brisbane and Northside also partner with Health Consumers Queensland, Consumers Health Forum and local public hospitals. This allows them to:

- Understand consumer needs and expectations
- Develop and deliver training to support consumer representatives
- Learn about innovative approaches and best practice for partnering with consumers that other organisations are delivering.

## Find out more

Further information and resources on the attributes of high-performing person-centred healthcare organisations, the Partnering with Consumers Standard and the development of the case studies include:

- [Person-Centred Healthcare Organisations](#)
- [National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards](#)
- [St Vincent's Private Hospital Brisbane](#)
- [St Vincent's Private Hospital Northside.](#)

## Acknowledgements

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