

# The SWSAHS Community Participation Framework

## What is it about?

This Community Participation Framework identifies a range of commitments by SWSAHS to the development of participation partnerships between SWSAHS and its communities.

There is growing evidence to support the importance of involving consumers, carers and communities in the planning and operation of health services. Community participation is the involvement of consumers and carers in decisions about individual health care and health care services, as well as the involvement of communities in decisions about the provision of health care services. This commitment to participation will lead to health processes that are more transparent, accountable and reliable.

South Western Sydney Area Health Service (SWSAHS) continues to develop a more structured and coordinated approach to the participation of community members. This includes the involvement of consumers, carers and community members in decision-making and evaluation of services, and the formation of partnerships between consumers, carers, communities, health services and health professionals. Through their participation and by sharing their views and perspectives, community members make a valuable contribution to SWSAHS.

Community participation is a 'way of working with'. This philosophy of participation will underpin the activities of the organisation. Participation practice embraces a philosophy of working 'with', rather than 'doing to', people.

## Who is it for?

The Framework identifies the formal participation processes that will be supported by SWSAHS as an organisation. It provides guidance to all health services in undertaking community participation. It has been developed within SWSAHS as a reference for everyone involved in these activities including community representatives, consumers, carers and staff.

The Community Participation Framework applies to all the services provided by SWSAHS. While the Framework identifies a commitment to community participation from SWSAHS and provides guidance to health workers, it is also supported by community members, and recognises and is relevant to, the needs of community members.