

Consumer Engagement Framework





Contact details

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Acknowledgement

In the spirit of unity and respect, BreastScreen Victoria acknowledges the First Peoples of these lands and waterways.

We recognise their deep connection to the earth and the importance of holistic wellbeing as we embark on our shared journey of breast health.

A note of thanks

The development of this Framework has involved the contributions, reflections and suggestions of numerous stakeholders, such as our Consumer Network, staff and other Health Organisations.

The individuals involved share a passion for ensuring our breast screening services continue to evolve to meet the changing needs of our current and future clients. We would like to thank everyone who donated their time and experience to support the development of this document

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Introduction

BreastScreen Victoria is an accredited part of BreastScreen Australia – the national population screening program for breast cancer, jointly funded by both the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments. The service is delivered through a network of contracted providers that provide breast screening and reading and assessment services to clients across Victoria. This includes over 55 Screening services, 8 Reading and Assessment Services and 2 Mobile Screening services.

The consumer voice remains a central priority for BreastScreen Victoria and is embedded throughout our Strategic Plan 2025–29. We recognise the vital role that consumer experiences and participation barriers play in shaping our decisions, priorities, and strategies. This insight helps ensure we continue to provide a high-quality breast screening service that meets the needs of age-eligible Victorians and maintains full compliance with all regulatory and quality standards.



What is consumer engagement?

Consumer engagement is the meaningful involvement of individuals in shaping how BreastScreen Victoria designs and delivers its services. This includes contributing to decision-making, service planning, and policy development. By partnering with consumers, BreastScreen Victoria ensures that diverse community voices are heard and that our services are continually improved and tailored to meet the health and wellbeing needs of all Victorians.

Research demonstrates that meaningful engagement with consumers in healthcare results in a range of benefits, including:

- Improved accessibility and responsiveness of services, especially for under-screened and vulnerable populations.
- Better health and wellbeing outcomes across communities.
- Increased health literacy and awareness of available services.
- More informed decision-making that enhances the quality and sustainability of services over time.

Effective consumer engagement is grounded in principles of open communication, active listening, inclusive participation, responsiveness, and constructive feedback. Even when consumer suggestions cannot be implemented, it is vital to communicate the final decision and explain the reasoning behind it.



Background and context

BreastScreen Victoria has a long history of consumer engagement, with a state Consumer Advisory Committee formed in 1996, along with regional Consumer Reference Groups. Both the advisory committee and reference groups involved consumers in the development of health promotion activities, client satisfaction surveys, service planning and more.

In 2012, BreastScreen Victoria implemented an operational change that involved retiring the Consumer Advisory Committee and Consumer Reference Groups. These structures were replaced with the Ambassador Program and the introduction of state and regional consumer engagement forums.

BreastScreen Victoria launched the Client Centric Care Strategy in 2016 to complement and strengthen the consumer engagement activities already being implemented locally at individual screening clinics. The Client Centric Care Strategy led to the initiation of the MyCare Program in 2018, which grouped 12 key projects into five streams, with the aim of ensuring every client received the best possible service at every step along the screening and assessment pathway.

Consumer Representatives were recruited as part of MyCare to represent the voice and experience of BreastScreen Victoria clients in formalised processes such as Project Boards, focus groups and the Capacity Steering Committee.

The MyCare Program identified that consumer engagement needed to be embedded in the business-as-usual practices of BreastScreen Victoria. This led to the creation of a dedicated role within the Communications and Client Engagement team with the remit of expanding on the consumer engagement work that had been carried out by the Client Centric Care and MyCare projects.

Now, underpinned by this Framework, consumer engagement is embedded at every level of the organisation and is a mature process as part of our operations. The establishment of the Consumer Advisory Group, the Aboriginal Consumer Advisory Group and Disability Consumer Advisory Group ensures that the consumer voice is heard by our Executive team while the broader Consumer Network continues to support operational engagement opportunities.

Audience

The audience of the Consumer Engagement Framework is the BreastScreen Victoria Board, the BreastScreen Victoria team including the Coordination Unit, Screening Services and Reading and Assessment Services and those who are working in a similar field and are involved in the development of a Consumer Framework.

Purpose and principles for consumer engagement

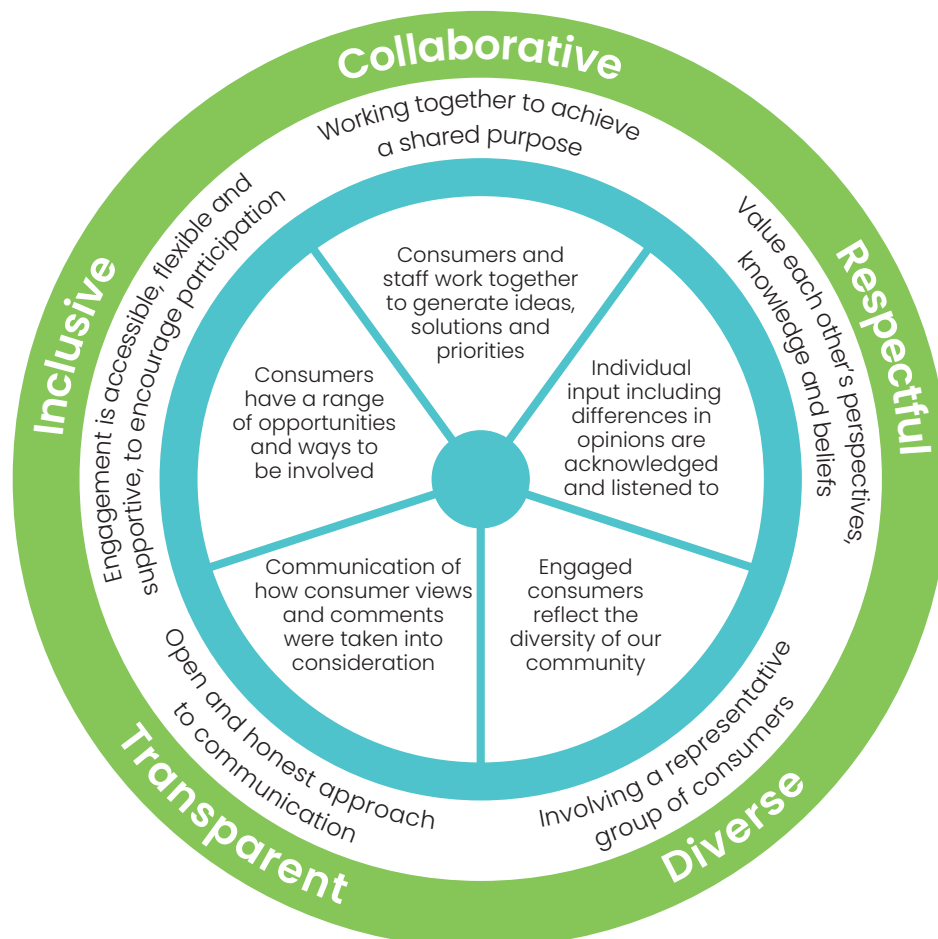
The Framework provides guidance for consumer engagement at BreastScreen Victoria and incorporates principles that were co-designed with consumers and staff during the development process.

Purpose:

To improve the quality, accessibility and uptake of breast screening services for current and future clients, as informed by the consumer voice.

Principles:

- The framework outlines principles that support meaningful, fair, and transparent consumer involvement.
- These principles ensure consumers help shape services throughout planning, design, and evaluation.
- Overall, they aim to create services that are responsive, inclusive, and accountable.



Consumer engagement pathways

BreastScreen Victoria offers multiple ways for members of the Consumer Network to contribute to shaping services and programs. These pathways align with different types of engagement, from introductory activities to strategic roles.

Ways to participate

Consumers can participate through:

- Advisory roles on the Consumer Advisory Group, Aboriginal Consumer Advisory Group, and Disability Consumer Advisory Group.
- Committee involvement in Service Quality and Research Advisory Committees.
- Focus groups and special projects, including EOIs for research.
- Program promotion via communications and social media.
- Feedback channels such as client feedback surveys for quality improvement



Types of consumer engagement

		Eligibility (please refer to definitions on page 13)	Involvement	Example	Additional
Consumer Network engagement	Individuals join the Consumer Network to stay informed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients • Consumers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive updates via a consumer network newsletter • Welcome letter from BreastScreen Victoria CEO • Message from BSVs Consumer Engagement Coordinator, including access to BSV Consumer Engagement Guide 	<i>A person signs up for the BreastScreen Victoria Consumer Network and receives quarterly newsletters</i>	All roles are voluntary
Introductory engagement	Consumers may be involved in short-term or one-off activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients • Consumers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive updates and invitations to participate in surveys or consultations 	<i>A client participates in a one-time photo shoot for a campaign</i>	All roles are voluntary
Collaborative engagement	This involves ongoing participation in structured activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serving as a client representative on project boards or committees • Attending community events or forums 	<i>A client joins a working group to open a new clinic</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy and Procedure acknowledged • Training and support provided • This is a voluntary role (please refer to our Consumer Representative Allowance and Reimbursement information for details)
Strategic engagement	This is the most involved tier, where consumers take on a representative role in one of BreastScreen Victoria's consumer advisory groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership in one of the BreastScreen Victoria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consumer Advisory Group - Aboriginal Consumer Advisory Group - Disability Consumer Advisory Group - Research Advisory Group - Service Quality Committee 	<i>A member of the LGBTQIA+ community serves on the Consumer Advisory Group</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formalised position description • Policy and Procedure acknowledged • Training and support provided • This is a voluntary role (please refer to our Consumer Representative Allowance and Reimbursement information for details)
Alumni engagement	This level recognises and leverages the experience of past high-level consumer contributors Alumni continue to support us in mentoring roles, even after their formal term has ended	An individual who has finished their term with one of our consumers advisory representative groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guiding new consumer representatives or advisory group members 	<i>A former Consumer Advisory Group member mentors a new member</i>	All roles are voluntary

Training and capability uplift

To ensure meaningful and effective consumer engagement, BreastScreen Victoria is committed to building the capability of both staff and consumer representatives. This includes equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to participate in engagement activities and contribute to service improvement.

For staff

BreastScreen Victoria staff will be supported through:

- **Training modules** on consumer engagement principles, cultural safety, trauma informed engagement and inclusive communication.
- **Workshops** on co-design methodologies and working with diverse communities.
- **Toolkits and guides** to assist in planning and implementing engagement activities.
- **Mentoring and peer support** to share best practices and learn from lived experience.

For consumers

Consumer representatives will be supported through:

- **Orientation sessions** to introduce BreastScreen Victoria's services, engagement pathways, and expectations.
- **Ongoing training** in governance, meeting participation and health literacy.
- **Access to resources** such as the Consumer Engagement Guide and relevant policies.
- **Mentorship opportunities** through the Alumni Engagement Level to foster leadership and continuity.

Evaluation and feedback

Training programs will be regularly evaluated through participant feedback and engagement outcomes. This ensures continuous improvement and alignment with the needs of both staff and consumers.

Equity and inclusion in the Consumer Network

To ensure equitable representation of all current and future clients, the BreastScreen Victoria Consumer Network must be diverse and inclusive. A key priority is to increase participation in breast screening among priority under-screened populations. This includes women from low socioeconomic backgrounds, people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, those living in rural and remote areas, people with disabilities, and LGBTQIA+ people.

Equity in consumer engagement means actively seeking out and valuing the voices of those who have historically faced barriers to participation. Understanding the lived experiences of these communities is essential to improving service delivery and outcomes.

BreastScreen Victoria partners with trusted key organisations that supports diversity, inclusion, and equity. These partnerships are embedded in everyday practice and play a vital role in ensuring, culturally appropriate, accessible, and effective engagement strategies for priority communities.



Governance and accountability

Effective consumer engagement requires clear governance structures and accountability mechanisms to ensure that consumer voices are meaningfully integrated into BreastScreen Victoria's decision-making processes. All consumer engagement roles outlined in this Framework are voluntary positions. BreastScreen Victoria values the time and expertise contributed by consumers and provides training and support to ensure meaningful participation.

Governance structures

Consumer engagement at BreastScreen Victoria is overseen by:

- **The Consumer Engagement Coordinator**, who leads implementation of the Framework, supports staff and consumers in engagement activities, and ensures alignment with strategic priorities.
- **The Consumer Advisory Group (CAG), Aboriginal Consumer Advisory Group (ACAG), and Disability Consumer Advisory Group (DCAG)**, which provide strategic advice to the executive team and ensure representation of diverse lived experiences.
- **The Executive Leadership Team**, which is responsible for embedding consumer engagement into organisational strategy, policy, and service delivery, and for ensuring that consumer input informs key decisions.

These structures ensure that consumer perspectives are represented at all levels of the organisation, from operational activities to strategic planning—and that engagement is not siloed but embedded across teams.

Accountability mechanisms

To maintain transparency and accountability, BreastScreen Victoria will:

- **Report annually** on consumer engagement activities, outcomes, and areas for improvement, including progress against strategic goals and equity targets.

- **Monitor participation** across engagement levels to ensure diversity, inclusion, and representation of under-screened communities.
- **Evaluate impact** through feedback mechanisms, service improvements, and screening participation data, with findings shared internally and externally.
- **Respond to consumer input** with clear communication about decisions made, actions taken, and reasons when suggestions cannot be implemented.
- **Maintain documentation** of engagement activities, including meeting minutes, feedback summaries, and decision-making processes, to ensure transparency and traceability.

Consumer representatives will be supported with:

- **Clear role descriptions**, outlining expectations, responsibilities, and time commitments.
- **Access to relevant policies and procedures**, including codes of conduct and confidentiality agreements.
- **Training and mentoring**, to build confidence and capacity in governance, and health literacy.
- **Regular check-ins and debriefs**, to ensure wellbeing and provide opportunities for reflection and feedback.

BreastScreen Victoria is committed to fostering a culture of respect, inclusion, and shared accountability, where consumer voices are not only heard but actively shape the future of breast screening services.

Definitions

These definitions are for words that appear in this document, as applied in the organisational context of BreastScreen Victoria.

Accessibility: The practice of being able to be easily used. At BreastScreen Victoria, accessibility is inclusive of but not limited to physical, regional, cultural, language, environmental and emotional safety of the service, particularly for under-screened groups.

BreastScreen Victoria Coordination Unit: The central services coordination team, based in Carlton, oversees client invitations, consumer and community engagement, communications, policy, operations, innovation and research, clinical quality, and information technology services.

Client: An individual who is currently screening or has screened with the BreastScreen Victoria program within the past five years.

Co-design: An approach that actively involves consumers, inviting collaboration on the design process by bringing together different experiences and perspectives to achieve a shared outcome.

Community: A group of people who share common characteristics or interests such as location, experiences, beliefs, traditions or customs. People may be considered members of more than one community.

Community organisation: Organisations that represent groups with common interests.

Consumer: A consumer may be an eligible woman who screens with the BreastScreen Victoria program, or a career, guardian, or another person with a strong connection to a BreastScreen Victoria client.

Consumer Advisory Group: An established group comprised of consumer representatives, along with community organisations that represent under-screened communities, as appropriate. It provides a structured partnership between consumers and the health service and may give advice, direction and guidance to the organisation.

Consumer engagement: The process through which consumers are actively involved in the decision making, service planning and policy development of the service.

Consumer Network: The network of Consumer Members who are actively engaged with BreastScreen Victoria, via different levels of engagement.

Consumer Network member: An individual who has chosen to regularly engage as part of the BreastScreen Victoria Consumer Network.

Consumer representative: A Consumer Network Member who has been appointed to a specific role, such as to a committee or project, to represent the broader consumer perspective.

Breast screen (Mammogram): An x-ray of the breast tissue that provides a two-dimensional, digital image of each breast. It can detect cancer that is too small to see or feel, before symptoms develop.

Mobile Screening Service: Mobile vans which travel across Victoria to deliver breast screening services rural and regional communities.

BreastScreen Victoria team: All staff from our Screening Services, Reading and Assessment Services and Coordination Unit who work as one cohesive and integrated team with a shared vision and purpose, to deliver our vision of towards no deaths from breast cancer in Victoria as defined by the BreastScreen Victoria Strategic Plan 2025-2029

Reading and Assessment Service: These services read images from multiple clinics, including the MSS, along with providing further follow-up tests required and eventual diagnosis. Some Reading and Assessment services also do breast screening.

Screening services: A network of contracted providers that deliver breast screening services to clients at screening clinics across the state.

Priority populations: Population group or community that participates in screening programs at lower rates than the rest of the Victorian population.



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