

Consumer Network Guide





Contact details

For further information about the Consumer Network Guide please contact us via email: consumerengagement@breastscreen.org.au

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.

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About BreastScreen Victoria

BreastScreen Victoria operates a population-based breast cancer screening program that aims to reduce the impact of breast cancer and save lives through early detection. We provide free breast screens (mammograms) to women and the trans and gender-diverse community aged 40 and over without breast symptoms, targeting those aged 50-74 years who are proven to benefit the most from population-based screening.

We are contracted by the Victorian Department of Health to deliver breast screening in Victoria as part of the national BreastScreen Australia Program. The Program is jointly funded by the Australian and State and Territory Governments and was under review during the development of this Strategy.

BreastScreen Victoria operates across a network of permanent and mobile screening clinics and assessment services to provide high-quality and inclusive care for the Victorian community. Our program is client-focused, embedding client input and feedback at every stage.

Our services are quality assured and accredited under the BreastScreen Australia National Accreditation program. Performance is measured against the National Accreditation Standards. Collaboration, partnership, and a shared purpose with our service providers across the BreastScreen Victoria program are essential to achieving the best outcomes for our clients.

Purpose

This handbook sets out the importance of consumer engagement and the role of our Consumer Network at BreastScreen Victoria, what you can expect from engaging as a consumer, and our responsibilities to you.

It provides introductory information about the BreastScreen Victoria program and key messages to support you, as a member of our Consumer Network, to meaningfully engage in opportunities and ensure our work is informed by the consumer voice.



Our consumer network and your role

BreastScreen Victoria's Consumer Network is a group of people who actively contribute their insights, experiences, and feedback to help shape the planning and delivery of our services. By sharing your perspective, you play an important role in ensuring our breast screening program is accessible, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of all Victorians.

What is the Consumer Network?

- A flexible and inclusive structure that allows members to engage at a level that suits their interests, availability, and comfort.
- Participation is voluntary, there is no requirement for formal training or prior experience.
- Members are encouraged to share any relevant skills, lived experience, or areas of interest. This helps us match opportunities where your expertise or perspective is most valuable.
- Every individual brings unique and equally important experiences. Together, we foster a culture of respect, collaboration, and continuous learning.

Support for you:

At BreastScreen Victoria, we care deeply about the mental health and wellbeing of our Consumer Network members. We acknowledge that some conversations and topics may be sensitive or triggering at times. Your emotional safety is important to us, and we encourage you to take breaks, set boundaries, and reach out for support whenever needed.

As part of this commitment, Consumer Network members can access BreastScreen Victoria's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) as volunteers. This confidential service offers professional support for emotional wellbeing. If you would like to use this service, please contact the Consumer Engagement Coordinator for assistance.

Your role as a member

Stay informed:

Receive updates about programs, initiatives, and engagement opportunities through newsletters and communications.



Share your perspective:

Your feedback helps us improve services and address barriers to participation.



Participate in activities:

You may be invited to join focus groups, surveys, special projects, or promotional campaigns. These opportunities are voluntary and flexible.



Choose your level of involvement:

From occasional feedback to advisory roles, you decide how and when to contribute.



Champion equity and inclusion:

By sharing your insights, you help us better serve priority populations and create a welcoming environment for all clients.



Types of consumer engagement

		Eligibility (please refer to definitions on page 9)	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

Building your skills and using your lived experience strategically

At BreastScreen Victoria, we value the unique perspectives and experiences you bring as a Consumer Network member. We want to support you to grow your skills and confidence so you can contribute in ways that have a greater impact on our services and communities.

How we support you

- **Orientation and training:** Introductory sessions to help you understand our program, engagement pathways, and expectations.
- **Skill development:** Opportunities to learn about governance, meeting participation, health literacy, and co-design methods.
- **Mentoring:** Access to experienced consumer representatives and alumni who can guide you in taking on more involved roles.
- **Resources:** Toolkits, guides, and ongoing support from the Consumer Engagement Coordinator to help you feel prepared and informed.
- **Inclusive Support:** We provide culturally safe and accessible training tailored to diverse needs.

Why this matters

Your lived experience is powerful. By sharing your insights in strategic roles, such as advisory groups, committees, or project boards, you help shape decisions that improve accessibility, equity, and quality of care for all Victorians.

If you're interested in building your skills or exploring more involved opportunities, contact the Consumer Engagement Coordinator at consumerengagement@breastscreen.org.au.



Allowances and reimbursements

All consumer engagement roles at BreastScreen Victoria are **voluntary**. We value your time and contribution, and while you are not paid for your role, you may be eligible for financial support to cover reasonable expenses.

Consumer representative allowance

If you are appointed to a committee, advisory group, or project board, you can receive an allowance for each meeting you attend (or related activities).

- Covers: travel, meals, incidentals, and preparation time.
- Allowance is a set amount based on location and meeting type.

Consumer reimbursement

If you participate in ad-hoc activities (e.g., events, site visits, resource reviews, media activities), you can claim reimbursement for reasonable expenses with prior approval.

- Examples: travel, meals, printing, childcare, carer costs, training expenses.
- If you receive a gift or claim an allowance, you cannot also claim reimbursement.

For any questions or support, please contact the **Consumer Engagement Coordinator** at consumerengagement@breastscreen.org.au.



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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