Consumer Advisory Committee
Terms of Reference

1. Responsibilities of the committee

Purpose
There are ongoing challenges to address midwifery practice in Australia requiring the active involvement of the Australian College of Midwives (the College) and it is recognised that consumers are a critical component in the delivery of maternity services in Australia. The Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC) will provide advice and make recommendations to the College on these matters from a consumer perspective.

Role
The role of the committee is to:

- support the College to work in partnership with consumers and consumer organisations;
- provide expert advice to the College (including the Board) via Chief Executive Officer (CEO) on matters related to consumers of midwifery care and maternity services;
- identify the needs of consumers and bring these to the attention of the College;
- provide expert advice and support to the CEO on ways in which to utilise national/international policies and developments in midwifery practice to assist with the ongoing development of midwifery in Australia, from a consumer perspective;
- make recommendations from a consumer perspective about ways in which the College can effectively contribute to the ongoing development of midwifery practice and high quality, safe maternity care in Australia;
- undertake specified tasks or projects as requested by the CEO from time to time, such as drafting College policies, responding to external consultations, other relevant projects relating to midwifery practice, from a consumer perspective;
- represent the College as either individuals or as a group when requested to do so by the CEO in matters of relevance for consumers and as resources permit;
- liaise with various national and international organisations and individuals on behalf of the College when requested to do so by the CEO;
- provide input to the CEO on the selection of experts to represent the College on national/international committees relating to consumers as necessary;
- liaise with any other College committee through the Chair as matters arise;

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• assist with communicating College activities to consumers and consumer organisations;
• provide representation on maternity consumer groups; and
• carry out the responsibilities/role in a culturally-safe manner, demonstrating respect and understanding of the wide variety of cultural beliefs and practices members may come across during their time on this committee.

Members should be prepared to attend all scheduled teleconferences or web conferences for the committee, with a minimum of 50% attendance per year to maintain committee membership. Further, members are expected to actively participate in all dialogue that occurs “out of session” pertaining to committee business, which may on occasion require a quick response. This information will inform decisions related to continued membership of the committee.

2. Structure of the committee

Membership
The committee members shall be appointed by the CEO of the College. The CEO may determine the size of the committee and may vary the number of appointees from time to time as the need arises. The ideal size of the committee is 11 members, including the College’s Midwifery Advisor within the Policy Unit. This will allow for diversity as well as ensuring an odd number of members to enable a consensus to be reached when voting occurs.

Members of the committee shall be selected on merit following an expression of interest (EOI) process. Members shall meet the following requirements:
• be a current financial member of the College;
• demonstrate an interest in the ACM vision and goals and consumer issues;
• demonstrate that they are, or have been, a consumer of midwifery care;
• have experience in, or a capacity to, represent consumers with regards to midwifery practice and maternity services in Australia;
• have e-mail access; and
• have a willingness to donate time and expertise to the scheduled meetings and activities undertaken by the committee on behalf of the College as outlined in this TOR.

Organisational members
The CEO may on occasion invite representatives from relevant organisations to join the committee outside of the EOI process.

When an organisational representative reaches the end of his/her term, the organisation will be invited to nominate a representative for another term which may be the current representative, or a new person. Organisational representatives may serve for a maximum of six consecutive years.

Chair
The committee shall be chaired by a member of the committee as approved by the CEO.
When the position of Chair is to be filled, members of the committee can nominate for the position by submitting an application to the CEO. The CEO will appoint the Chair. The minimum requirements for application to position of Chair include:

- the Committee Chair Nomination form
  - To be supported by at least two members of the relevant committee
- EOI outlining ability to meet the criteria and responsibilities of Chair
  - To show evidence of skills such as managing meetings, time keeping, delegating tasks

Tips on the roles and responsibilities of an effective Chair can be accessed here:

- [http://www.wikihow.com/Chair-a-Conference-Call](http://www.wikihow.com/Chair-a-Conference-Call)
- [http://www.ehow.com/how_2077063_be-committee-chairman.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_2077063_be-committee-chairman.html)

The length of appointment for the Chair will be the same as for all members and will expire when the member’s appointment to the committee expires.

The Chair shall be responsible for:

- determining the agenda for meetings (This will require the Chair to be current with issues pertaining to consumer issues and midwifery practice and may require working with the College Midwifery Advisor, Policy Unit to identify matters that need to be addressed by the Committee);
- chairing meetings;
- leading discussion and ensuring all committee members have the opportunity to contribute their expertise and views;
- ensuring that the committee’s work is completed on specific tasks or projects in a timely manner;
- co-ordinating the preparation of the committee’s quarterly reports to the CEO; and
- shall have casting vote in a tied decision of the committee.

**Length of appointment**
Each member of the committee shall be appointed by the CEO for a term of 3 years and is eligible to apply for one further 3 year term, up to a maximum of six consecutive years on the committee.

The length of appointment for the Chair will be the same as for all members and will expire when the member’s appointment to the Committee expires.

**Reappointment**
Members are expected to respond to an EOI process at the end of their first term such that they re-confirm their commitment to the committee and the committee obligations. Re-appointment to the committee will be dependent on a successful EOI being completed as well as evidence being noted of active participation in committee meetings and project work over the period of the previous appointment. Ideally, members should not all be appointed to commence at the same time to ensure the committee retains continuity and consistency in its functioning. This may mean, on occasion, that a member’s appointment is soft-rolled into a further period of time before the EOI process for re-appointment commences.

At the end of the maximum term of appointment (2 terms of 3 years each), individuals shall be required to undertake a period of ‘downtime’ for a minimum of 2
years before applying for a position on the Committee again unless they are specifically invited by the CEO to re-apply for the role on the Committee at the end of this period.

**Filling a vacancy**
Members of the committee may resign their position with 4 weeks’ notice in writing of their intention to do so. The CEO may appoint a replacement member in consultation with the Chair of the committee following an EOI process.

**Temporary/ad hoc**
Members may be invited by the College CEO to join the committee for specific tasks and matters. The length of term for this member will be defined in the EOI process and re-appointment will be dependent on need and determined by the CEO.

**Conflict of interest**
In order to prevent the potential risk of conflict of interest no more than one Director or senior manager from another organisation or business with similar objects to the ACM may be a member of the advisory committee.

3. **Workings of the committee**

**Communication within the committee**
The committee will communicate predominantly by e-mail and telephone. All committee communication must be kept within the committee unless advised differently by the Chair or the CEO. Any changes of e-mail address for individual committee members should be communicated with both the committee and the Head Office of the College.

- Teleconference or web conference by arrangement with the College Head Office
- Meeting schedule as arranged by the committee
- Face-to-face meetings of the committee will be opportunistic – e.g. at national midwifery conferences.

**Frequency of meetings**
The schedule for meetings will be the responsibility of the Chair, in consultation with the committee members. The committee should meet formally at least four times per year in addition to addressing matters arising at any time. Ideally, meetings will be held within business hours, any changes to this will need to be agreed with the Chair and the College’s Midwifery Advisor within the Policy Unit.

**Quorum**
50% plus 1

**Decision making**
Decisions are reached by consensus. In the event of a tied committee the Chair will have the deciding vote.

**Secretariat support**
The College Head Office will provide secretariat support to the committee where possible including:
- providing means of communication via e-mail, teleconference and web conference links;
- recording draft minutes of meetings; and
- copying and distribution of information as directed by the Chair.

Funding/ resources
Membership of the committee is honorary and attracts no remuneration or fee for services provided.

There is no specifically allocated budget for the work of the committee. The committee’s work shall be resourced using the office services allocations in the budget provided by the College for teleconferencing and IT services.

The CEO may determine to make resources available for a specific project or activity undertaken by one or more members of the committee from time to time.

Stakeholders
The key stakeholders in this committee are:
- members of the College and
- midwives and consumers with an interest in and knowledge of consumer issues related to midwifery practice and maternity services.

Indemnity
The activities of the committee in providing advice on national/international private midwifery practice matters to the College are covered by the College’s professional indemnity insurance policy, in accordance with the terms of that policy.

Dispute resolution
The committee will be expected to foster professional dialogue among its members and to support and even encourage differences of view based on fact or substance. Professional differences of view can provide a robust basis for effective and informed decision making on an issue, by providing the opportunity for reflection on alternative viewpoints or perspectives.

Where the committee is unable to reach agreement on a particular matter, alternative views will be outlined in a report to the CEO with sufficient information to support informed decision-making by the CEO on substantive issues over which the disagreement arose.

4. Accountability of the committee

Reporting
The committee is responsible to the CEO of the College. The committee is required to provide a brief summary report of its activities (half to 1 page), quarterly. The dates are to be agreed with the CEO.

The committee is also required to keep minutes of any teleconference, web conference or face to face meetings it holds. The minutes shall be a brief summary of any decisions made or recommendations agreed to by the committee relevant to its role and responsibilities as outlined in Part 1.
Deed Poll
Members are required to sign the ‘Deed Poll by Committee Members about confidentiality, conflict of interest and Intellectual property’, within one month of their appointment as required by the ACM Governance Policy.

Dissolution of the committee
The CEO reserves the right to disband this committee if in the judgement of the CEO of the day, the committee is no longer needed to support the work of the College or no longer able to fulfill its responsibilities.