

# Health Advisory Council Fact Sheet

The *Health Care Act 2008* changed the governance arrangements for the public health system in South Australia from 1 July 2008. This fact sheet describes the key changes under the *Health Care Act 2008*, outlines the roles and functions of country Health Advisory Councils (HACs) and highlights some of the main administrative requirements for the operation of country HACs.

## What is the purpose of the *Health Care Act 2008*?

The *Health Care Act 2008* aims to create a unified integrated health system for South Australia, with improved state wide coordination and integration of public health services.

The *Health Care Act 2008* aims to reduce fragmentation and duplication of services and streamlines governance arrangements, underpinning the implementation of South Australia's Health Care Plan.

## What are some of the key changes under the *Health Care Act 2008*?

As of 1 July 2008:

- The Chief Executive of the Department of Health has direct responsibility and accountability for managing South Australia's public health system;
- Regional Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) report directly to the Chief Executive of the Department of Health;
- The legal entity known as Country Health SA Incorporated has been established as an incorporated hospital, Country Health SA Hospital Incorporated. Country Health SA Hospital Inc is responsible for the planning and delivery of health services in the country region.

- Health Advisory Councils have been established across South Australia to give regional and other communities continued direct input into the health priorities.

## What is a Health Advisory Council ('HAC')?

- The *Health Care Act 2008* provides for the establishment of Health Advisory Councils (HACs) to ensure that the strong links between communities and their health services are maintained. HACs are either incorporated or unincorporated advisory bodies and are governed by their own constitutions or rules, as appropriate.
- Health Advisory Councils (HACs) undertake an advocacy role on behalf of the community, provide advice, and perform other functions, as determined under the *Health Care Act 2008*. They give local country communities continued direct input into their health priorities and planning.
- The Country Health SA Board HAC Inc acts as an "umbrella body" for other HACs established in country regions, providing advice from a whole of country perspective.



## What is the role of local Health Advisory Councils?

Under section 18 of the *Health Care Act 2008*, the role of HACs are to:

- Advocate for community interests;
- Provide advice about health services from a consumer, volunteer, carers or the community perspective;
- Provide advice about health goals, issues, priorities, plans and strategic initiatives;
- Provide advice or assistance about the development or implementation of systems designed to support the delivery of health services;
- Provide information to, and consult with, consumers, volunteers, carers and the community;
- Encourage community participation in programs that support health services and promote the importance of carers and volunteers in achieving successful outcomes;
- Consult with other bodies that are interested in the provision of health services within the community;
- Provide advice to the Minister about any matter referred to it by the Minister or the Chief Executive; and
- Participate in the consultation or assessment process associated with the selection of senior staff of a relative entity.

The specific functions of a HAC are also detailed in the HAC's constitution or rules.

## How are HACs governed?

HACs were given the option of being incorporated or unincorporated.

Each HAC is governed by a constitution (if incorporated) or set of rules (if unincorporated). The *Health Care Act 2008* also contains provisions relating to the governance of HACs.

## What is the difference between an incorporated and unincorporated HAC?

The difference between incorporated and unincorporated HACs is that incorporated HACs have the ability to hold and deal with assets.

## What are the requirements in relation to assets?

Incorporated HACs are able to hold assets for the benefit, purposes and use of the relevant site/s of Country Health SA Hospital Inc, i.e. health units within the HAC's local area.

Incorporated HACs are required to adhere to terms and conditions approved by the Minister, which outline how incorporated HACs must hold their assets. The constitutions of incorporated HACs also detail information about assets.

## What are the requirements for HAC meetings?

HACs are required under the terms of their constitution or rules to hold at least four ordinary meetings each year. These meetings must be arranged and conducted in accordance with the constitution or rules of the HAC. Special meetings of the HAC may also be called. An Annual General Meeting must be held each year.



### **What are the rules concerning membership?**

The constitution or rules outline the specific detail for the relevant HAC but generally, each HAC will comprise not fewer than six members and not more than 15 members, appointed in accordance with the constitution or rules, and ensuring that a majority of members are selected or appointed on the basis of being members of the community (as defined in the constitution or rules).

Councils may have up to eight resident members as well as one member appointed by the HAC following nomination by local government and one member appointed by the HAC following nomination by local member/s of Parliament. The HAC may consist of one member who is a medical practitioner and one member from a health unit, who are both nominated by an election process detailed in the constitution and rules. In addition, the Minister has discretion to appoint three members to the HAC.

Councils should have a balance of skills, qualifications and experience. There cannot be more than two medical practitioners as members at any one time. There should also be a gender balance in membership as far as practicable.

### **What is the role of HAC Members and the Presiding Members?**

Each HAC has a Presiding Member who is nominated by the HAC and appointed by the Minister to call and chair the meetings of the HAC. The Presiding Member should also ensure the HAC adheres to relevant policies, its constitution or rules, terms and conditions and the *Health Care Act 2008* when carrying out its functions.

Each HAC may also have a Nominated Officer who is responsible for ensuring meetings are called when requested by the Presiding Member or other members.

### **What is the relationship between Country Health SA Board HAC Inc and other HACs?**

The Country Health SA Board HAC Inc helps to coordinate the activities of local HACs in relation to whole of country issues.

Additionally, if HACs believe there is some particular issue of regional importance that should be brought to the attention of the Minister or Country Health SA Hospital Inc the HAC may raise the issue with Country Health SA Board HAC Inc in the first instance.

### **What are HAC's reporting requirements?**

Each HAC has annual reporting obligations under the *Health Care Act 2008*. Incorporated HACs must ensure that they keep proper accounts of their financial affairs and financial statements pertaining to each financial year to allow for annual auditing.

An annual report on the HACs activities must be delivered to the Minister within 3 months after the end of the financial year for tabling in Parliament.

Incorporated HACs should ensure that their financial records are readily accessible and up to date as the Minister can request a report on their financial status at any time.

The accounts of each HAC must also be produced to members at each Annual General Meeting.





## **What is the role of Country Health SA Hospital Incorporated?**

Country Health SA Hospital Inc is responsible for the daily operation of all country hospital sites. The CEO of Country Health SA Hospital Inc reports directly to the Chief Executive of the Department of Health on the operations of all country hospital sites.

If HACs have any queries about their functions they should contact Country Health SA Hospital Inc in the first instance.

### **Further information**

If you require any further information please contact Manager, Office of the Chief Executive Officer, Country Health SA Hospital Incorporated on 08 8226 6120.

