

## **SECTION 12: EVALUATION AND PLANNING**

### **SUMMARY OF CONCEPTS**

With the emergence of the concept of ‘consumerism’ in the health care system, patients – or ‘health consumers’ – have gained greater knowledge of their rights and greater equality and power.

In order to address the social determinants of health, government bodies and health officials have started to acknowledge and promote the need for involvement of individuals and community groups in decision-making about health care policies. Since 1985, a large number of significant organisations and publications addressing various areas of health care and the consumer, have emerged (Consumers’ Health Forum of Australia, 1990) including the development of systems of quality assurance.

In the foreword of a publication entitled ‘A Consumer Focus in the Department of Community Services and Health’ (Department of Community Services and Health, 1990, cited in Consumers’ Health Forum of Australia Inc., 1990) it is stated:

*“A consumer focus recognizes that consumers’ rights are part of our society and that as a government department we must strive to give consumers the best we can and to facilitate their participation in decisions and activities which affect them.” (p. 22).*

This process of collaboration can be directly facilitated by individual hospitals (Popper, 1990). Consumer representatives (e.g. Parent Advisory Groups) should be appointed to hospital quality assurance committees and administration boards. Promoting communication and information exchange will result in greater co-operation and better mutual understanding between parents and care providers. Such collaboration cannot only increase the standard of health care and of patient satisfaction, but also result in greater professional and personal satisfaction for health care providers.

### **SURVEY RESULTS**

- ✦ 7 hospitals (2.8%) indicated that they have a Parent Committee or similar mechanism, to obtain parent input for hospital administration.
- ✦ 3 of these hospitals also reported that they obtain suggestions on how to improve their care from a Paediatric Patient Committee.

Feedback and evaluation of hospital services is obtained from patient satisfaction questionnaires by 80 hospitals (31.6%). Private hospitals appear to take advantage of this method of quality assurance and client satisfaction to a greater extent (47.4%) than public hospitals (26%).