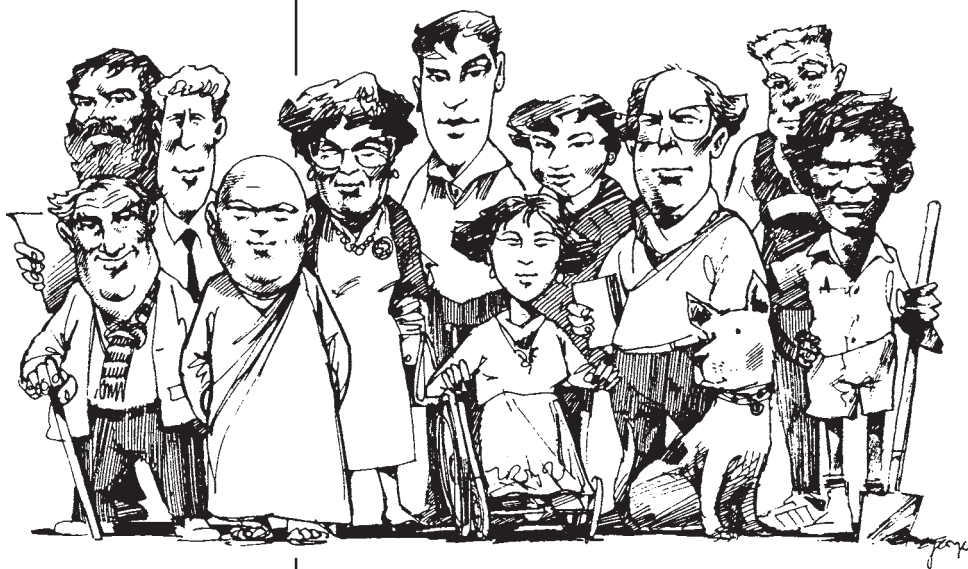


The little purple book of Community Rep-ing

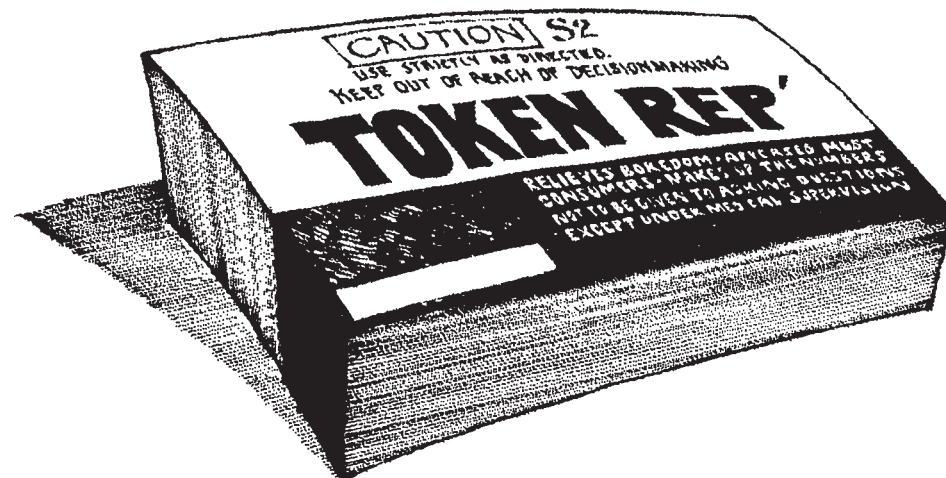
How to order

To order more copies of
The little purple book of Community Rep-ing
please contact the Publications Officer at
Adelaide Central Community Health Service
Phone: (08) 8342 8600

WHICH ONE IS NOT A COMMUNITY REP?....



The little purple book of Community Rep-ing



Publication of the Not Just A Token Rep Project
North West Suburbs Health & Social Welfare Council

Third Edition Published by
Adelaide Central Community
Health Service

Funded by
Consumers' Health Forum
of Australia

Cartoonist
George Aldridge

Third Edition
2003

acknowledgements

Chris Sanderson whose vision inspired the project.
Consumers' Health Forum of Australia for originally funding this project.
George Aldridge for his commitment and artistic talent.
The Publisher, writers and artist involved allow reproduction of any part of this publication for non-profit purposes. Any such use must be acknowledged.

Publisher

Adelaide Central Community Health Service ph (08) 8342 8600
First Edition 1994, Reprint 1995 by North West Suburbs Health & Social Welfare Council
Second Edition 1997. Third Edition (reset) 2003.
The Council was defunded by the SA Health Commission in 1995. Council members chose Parks Community Health Service to inherit *The little purple book of Community Rep-ing*.

ISBN 0 646 18487 9

Cartoonist

George Aldridge ph 0408 470 713

Writers

Marg Tatyzo
Ray Hirst
Charlie Murray
Fiona Verity

Members of the Steering Committee

Marg Tatyzo
Glenda Glazbrook
Bev Freeling

Layout & Design

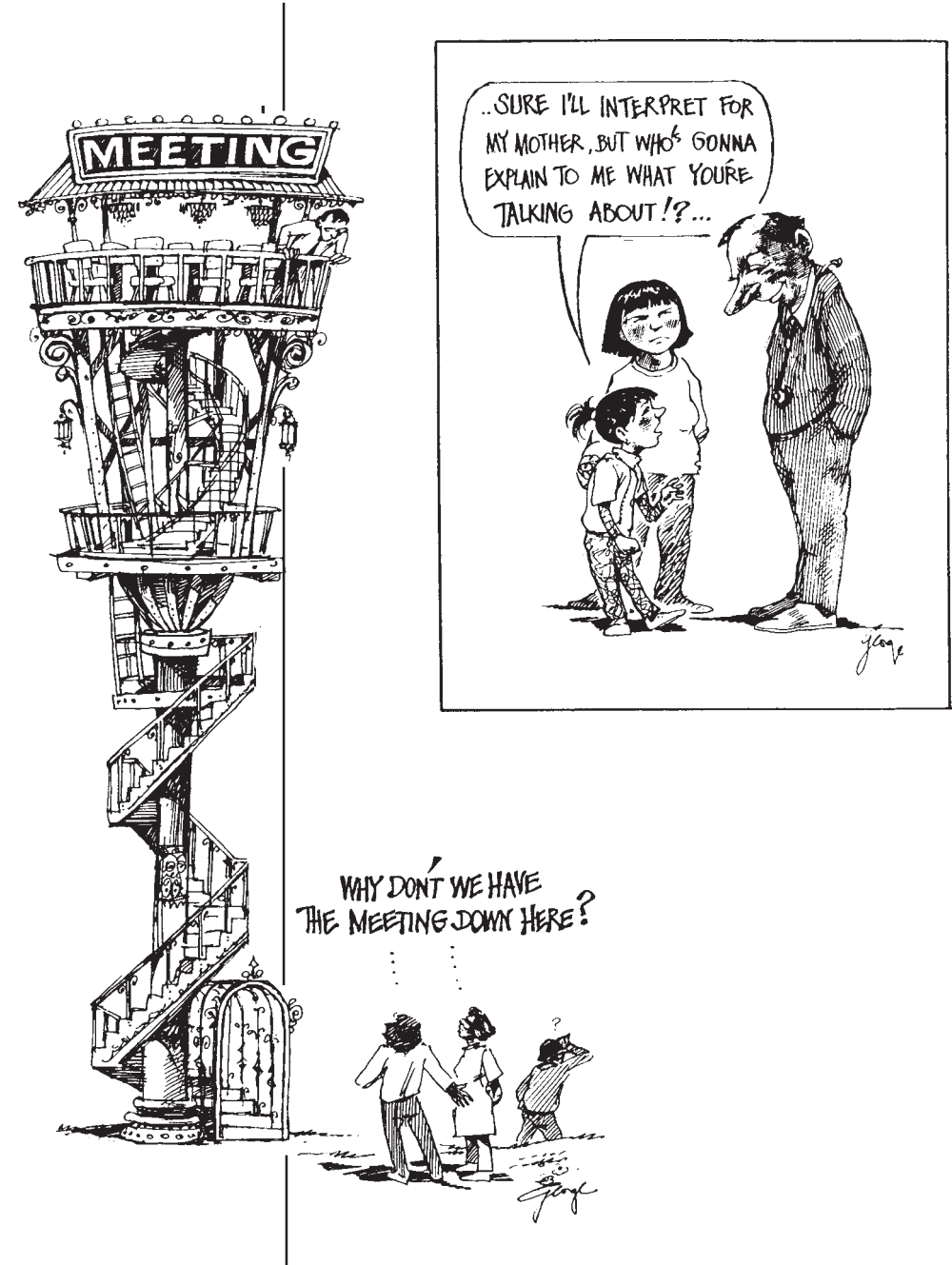
Ray Hirst
Jenny Hughes
Paraskevi Scounos

Printed by

Kookaburra Press

Thanks also to

Christine Gates
Khali Stanton
Membership of the NWS HSWC
SA Carers Association
Disability Information and Resource Centre
Individual Supported Accommodation Service
Quantum Housing
SPARK
Concern for Health and Our Kid's Environment
Port Adelaide Environment Forum
North West Suburbs Community Environment Centre
Casa Chile
Vietnamese Community Association
Kura Yerlo
Lesley Wanganeen
And most importantly, all those Reps we spoke to individually and in workshops.



Organisations worth joining...

Consumers' Health Forum of Australia

PO Box 170
Curtin ACT 2605
Ph: (02) 6281 0811
Fax: (02) 6281 0950
email: info@chf.org.au

Health Issues Centre

Level 5 Health Sciences 2
Latrobe University
Victoria 3086
Ph: (03) 9479 5827
Fax: (03) 9479 5977
email:
s.markos@latrobe.edu.au

South Australian Council of Social Services (SACOSS)

Level 1 Torrens Building
220 Victoria Square
Adelaide 5000
Ph: (08) 8226 4144
Fax (08) 8226 4144
email:
sacoss@sacoss.org.au
website:
www.sacoss.org.au

Who cares about Health in the '90's?; ed. Colin McDougall & Des McCulloch, Adelaide, 1992

Community Action

Community Quarterly: Community Development in Action: Journal Fixing the Government: Everybody's Guide to Lobbying in Australia; Katherine Beauchamp, Penguin, Victoria, 1986

Proof's in the Pudding: Possibilities for Local Community Work; C.W. Fairfield, NSW, 1984

Deprivation Participation & Community Action; ed. L Smith & D Jones, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1981

Consultation

Consultation Principles & Protocols; Health & Social Welfare Councils of SA

Consulting with your Community: A guide for Local Government & Associated Organisations; Sue Maywald, Local Government Community Services Assoc, 1989

Health Statistics

A Social Health Atlas of South Australia; SA Health Commission, Adelaide

Health Facts 1992; Report of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Australian Government Publishing Service

Meetings

More Bloody Meetings: The Human Side of Meetings; Video Art, London, 1976 (video and booklet)

Chairing a Meeting; TUTA Wodonga, TUTA Publications, 1984

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foreword

Welcome

This project was undertaken to highlight some of the pitfalls and satisfactions of entering into that catchery ‘community participation’. The booklet is meant to be taken seriously. It is meant to be laughed over. To recognise the sameness of people’s experiences, and to have a creative look at the ups and downs of ‘being on a committee’.

It is meant to provide the families, friends and partners of that strange breed who ‘go to meetings’ with an idea of why their ‘meeting goer’ often comes home blue in the face, head revolving and glazed over eyes muttering, ‘I need a drink’ or, ‘which meeting was I at?’ or ‘they remembered my name!’ or joy of joys, crying jubilantly, ‘WE DID IT!’

The beneficial changes that occur through community participation in decision making are real and were acknowledged by people in the cartooning workshops. Good participation processes, good outcomes and the thoughtful acceptance of change on behalf of those who do it well were appreciated by participants.

Inevitably, when meeting with consumers in times of cuts to health and welfare services, the pitfalls are brought to the fore. This is part of problem solving. It is part of recognising consumers’ newness to decision making processes, and for old hands, recognising the nature of the business when standing by people who are often on the fringe of politically influential systems.

True to their natures though, these ‘meeting goers’ saw the humourous side of the bizarre, as well as the giving side of the people who continue to support community representatives, even when at a certain risk to themselves. Most importantly, the participants recognised the value of those people who provide a place for others in their decision-making process.

This booklet has not set out to deny those good processes and thoughtful people, rather it is a humourous look at the stumbling blocks, with a view to encouraging more people to take steps to become like those other ‘thoughtful ones’ when engaging community representatives on their committees.

We thank all those involved and hope you enjoy this presentation as much as we have enjoyed putting it together.

Margaret Tatyzo, 1994

We list here a selection of books, practical guides and support organisations that may help in your participation as a Rep. The are particularly relevant for Reps in SA. You will find some of them in libraries of organisations like community health centres. Most Government departments also have libraries, information and advisory services so it is worth asking the Chair of the Committee you are on, or the Committee’s Executive Officer, how you can get access to this information. If you know of particular resources that have been helpful for possible future publication so of this booklet.

Some Useful References & Resources

Being a Rep

Guidelines for Consumer Representatives; Consumers’ Health Forum of Australia, Canberra, 1993

The Community Participation Workshop Kit; Adelaide Central Community Health Service, Adelaide, 2002

Community Participation

National Resource Centre for Consumer Participation in Health. ph 1800 625 619

website: <http://www.participateinhealth.org.au/>

A History of the North West Suburbs Health & Social Welfare Council 1988-95; Charlie Murray & Marg Tatyzo 1995 (available from SA Department of Human Services Library)

Healthy Participation: achieving greater public participation and accountability in the Australian health care system; National Health Strategy Background Paper No 12, 1993

“A Ladder of Citizen Participation” Arnstein, S R *AIP Journal*, USA, 1969 p 261

Primary Health Care

Talking Better Health Training Manual; Commonwealth of Australia 1994 (available from Community Health Accreditation and Standards Program)

Priorities in Health: Encouraging the Debate. Information Kit; 1995 (available from Community Health Accreditation and Standards Program)

Strategic Directions for Primary Health Care in SA; Primary Health Care Implementation Steering Committee and SA Health Commission, 1993

Social Health Strategy for SA; SA Health Commission, 1988

The Role of Primary Health Care in Health Promotion in Australia: (Interim Report); National Centre for Epidemiology & Population Health, 1991

introduction



The North West Suburbs Health and Social Welfare Council was a community participation organisation funded by the SA Health Commission from 1989-95. It had a membership of about 400 community members and 1.5 staff. The Health and Social Welfare Councils were defunded in December 1995. Through its work the Council developed a membership of people who were interested in community participation and consumer rights. Many of these members through the course of their involvement had been consumer or community Reps.

One of the frequent request that the Council had from organisations within and outside of the Health system was 'could you please provide us with a community or consumer Rep?' While it was encouraging to find that many organisations were now approaching their clients, patients, consumers or residents to involve them in decision making, it is important that community participation is not tokenistic.

It was with this idea in mind that we applied for, and successfully received, funds from the Consumers' Health Forum of Australia to conduct a 'Not Just a Token Rep' cartoon project.

what we hope to do

The aim of the project was to produce a humorous and accessible guide for people wanting to be community or consumer representatives, a guide which was based on the experiences of people who had actually been community or consumer representatives.

The project also aimed to bring together people who had been Reps in similar health related areas, and provide them with an opportunity to share ideas, experiences and resources.

... employ a cartoonist

Cartoons are a powerful medium, able to communicate what can often be complicated and sensitive messages to a wide range of people. Cartoons are an especially good means to cut through language and literacy barriers. With the money from the Consumers' Health Forum we employed well-known Adelaide cartoonist, George Aldridge. George worked with us and other groups and individuals to develop cartoons from people's experiences of being Reps.

LOOK...WE CAN'T PROVIDE YOU WITH ANY RESOURCES - PHONE, FAX OR FILING SYSTEMS - TODDLER CARE, TRAVEL COSTS OR TECHNICAL INFORMATION BUT WE CAN GIVE YOU LOTS OF THINGS TO DO!



introduction



... run workshops with Reps

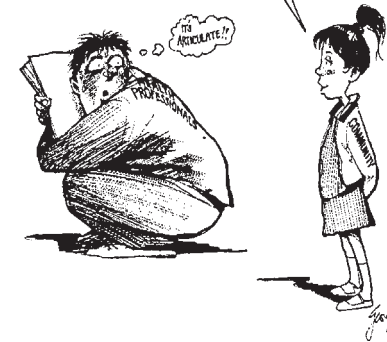
We ran a series of six, two hour workshops focusing on particular areas such as the environment, non-English speaking background issues, disability, members of Boards of Management, and other community organisations. We invited people who had been Reps in these areas to attend and talk about their stories and experiences. George attended all of these, and also met individually with a range of people outside of workshops.

Staff and members of the North West Suburbs Health & Social Welfare Council attended the workshops, assisting with facilitation and recording the issues raised from people's stories. We were also interested in ideas for solutions to people's concerns. The workshops provided a good opportunity for Reps to take some steps toward overcoming the isolation experienced as lone Reps. The skills and experiences of some Reps were used to help others to overcome some of the barriers to effective participation.

... and write a guide

Staff and members of the Steering Committee of the project at the Health & Social Welfare Council took the responsibility for writing the content of the booklet, based on what people said in the workshops. Drafts were circulated to as many people involved in the project as possible. From this long but very worthwhile process *The little purple book of Community Rep-ing* came to be!

DON'T BE AFRAID! I JUST WANT TO TALK!.. EXCHANGE SOME IDEAS, ..DISCUSS SOME ISSUES, EXPRESS MY CONCERNS AND MAKE COMMENT ON THE CURRENT GRATUITOUS VIOLENCE PERPETRATED AGAINST CHILDREN IN



Cartoon 14

Building a partnership

For decision making to include the people affected by the decisions then the ideal working relationship is a partnership between all those involved. This will mean that participants need to learn to speak the same language, or at least to understand each other. This will include understanding how bureaucracies work. It will also mean that the Community Rep needs good support and is able to take charge if the other people involved are not working as partners.

EXERCISE 1 (20-40mins)

OUTCOME

Participants will be able to identify the blocks to building a partnership between a Community Rep and professionals, and develop strategies towards building a partnership.

In the large group, talk about the cartoon and/or share stories about assumptions that can be made about the skills, knowledge, expectations ability etc of a Community rep.

Why are these assumptions made? (STORIES/ISSUES)

Share experiences of committees/groups who have actively involved and encouraged the Community Rep. How was this done? (SOLUTIONS)

Develop a list of ways that a committee or group can create an environment where the Community Rep has the opportunity to be a valuable participating member of the group. (STRATEGIES)

Develop an ACTION PLAN if appropriate.

Go through this exercise focussing on your own group.

issues raised in the workshops



Cartoon 7

Running meetings

If a meeting runs well then everyone participates and thinks together about problems and facts and finds solutions. There are lots of reasons a meeting can run badly, but it doesn't just come down to the chair or leader. Poor organisation, lack of basic rules, poor time management, time pressure and individuals who don't think about how their own behaviour affects the group can all create problems. This exercise should help a group find their own problems and solutions.

EXERCISE 1 (20 - 40 mins)

In the large group discuss:

- What is the person speaking FEELING?
- What are the others FEELING?
- Does the cartoon bring up stories of similar situations people have been in? (STORIES)
- Why does this situation happen?
- What are the positive and negative impacts?
- What effect can this behaviour have on the group? (ISSUES)

OUTCOME

Participants will be able to develop strategies to promote a group working effectively together with full participation

Discuss whether it has happened in this group.

Discuss how an individual or the group could deal with this situation.
Discuss the possible consequences of the above suggestions and form STRATEGIES.

Develop an ACTION PLAN

Participants freely shared stories about their experiences at the workshops used to develop this booklet. They told of their experiences: the barriers to being effective participants and what sorts of things help in overcoming barriers. Particular themes emerged from the workshops and they were:

Group Dynamics

Meeting procedures, levels of communication, how the agenda is set, who talks and who does not etc, were seen as a reflection of a group's commitment to genuinely allowing members of the committee to participate. It was considered that this depends a lot on the skills of the Chairperson. A skilled Chair will pick up on the different levels of power that people have within the group and make an effort to include all members in discussion and decision-making. Being a lone consumer representative on a committee with health professions can be an intimidating and isolating experience. One rep told the story of being on a committee for 14 months before being introduced to the other members. The workshops were used to help people with strategies to make the Rep's experience more useful and rewarding.

Access to Information

Material that is written in medical or bureaucratic jargon is a definite barrier to participation for many consumer representatives. There seems to be a need for a well publicised list of suggested contact points for resources and information (eg. The Consumers' Health Forum of Australia)

The need for support

Being a community or consumer Rep is often very isolating. Organising a support group or connecting with a self-help or community group can be ways of getting moral and practical support and information. Other practical support like costs for childcare and transport were raised, as well as sitting fees in some cases.

Hanging in there

While many barriers were identified in this project, there was an overwhelmingly strong commitment to participation. It was universally agreed that consumers and community Reps have a very important part to play. Participation should ensure that those people affected by decisions, or receiving the service, are involved in the decision making process.

how to use this booklet

This booklet has been developed directly from the experiences of community Reps. It is by no means a complete guide to participation or to being a Rep, but we hope it provides decision-makers and Reps with some ideas and resources to make participation more meaningful and rewarding.

We have divided the booklet into sections which reflect the content and themes which emerged from the workshops. Where possible we have included what we hope will be useful check-lists and references. We have also included a guide for community consultations which came out of some earlier work of the North West Suburbs Health & Social Welfare Council.

The cartoons are a very useful resource in running workshops. This can be done with your committee, or with any other groups, in order to reach a more satisfactory level of participation. We have included a suggested workshop outline. More information about this is at the end of the booklet.

The publishers and cartoonist encourage you to photocopy any cartoons or material contained in this booklet for non-profit purposes. However acknowledging both is required.

This project has been fun, and as the brilliant cartoons illustrate, it has captured many of the dilemmas difficulties and rewards of participating as a community Rep.

Our experience of working with communities and our commitment to ensuring community participation is rewarding and effective, has led us to develop this booklet. Its strength is that it is a practical booklet produced by Reps, for Reps. So Hang In There!



SECTION 6

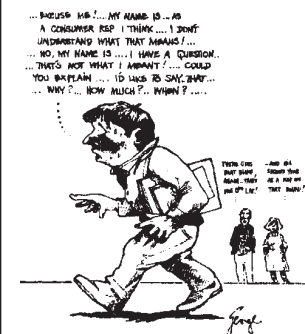
The Community Participation Workshop Kit

The cartoons have proved to be an exciting, stimulating and often humorous vehicle for discussing community issues, especially with people actively involved in change.

Workshop kit based around some of the cartoons in this book has been published as a loose-leaf manual. It includes notes on running the workshops and exercises designed to help groups to explore issue of community participation. Exercises encourage people to look at the issues from the individual, the group and the system level, and to come up with strategies through sharing success stories as well as analysing problems.

Two of the workshop exercises are presented in this section. The kit was developed by Nicky Page from a series of workshops written and trialled by Christine Gates. It is available through Adelaide Central Community Health Service.

Each of the 18 cartoons has a name, outcome and exercise(s).



... BECAUSE HIS ... MY NAME IS ... AS
A COMMUNITY REP I THINK ... I DON'T
UNDERSTAND WHERE THAT MANUS ...
... NO, MY NAME IS ... I HAVE A QUESTION ...
... THAT'S NOT WHAT I WANT ... COULD
YOU EXPLAIN ... I'D LIKE TO SAY ... BUT ...
... WHY? ... HOW MUCH? ... WHY? ...

Cartoon 1
Name
What a Rep needs to know

Community Reps can sometimes feel isolated and lacking in confidence. This can come down to lack of support, confusion or, lack of knowledge about the topic, the people involved or even the language used. This exercise can help identify what support and information a Rep needs.

Outcome
EXERCISE 1 (20 - 30 mins)
OUTCOME
Participants will be able to identify a range of strategies which will prepare and increase the confidence and skills of a Community Rep.
Exercise

In the large group ask participants to describe the FEELINGS of the Community Rep and the others in the cartoon.
OR



EXCUSE ME SIR!.... KINDLY LET ME ATTACH
YOUR NAME AND STIGMA !!

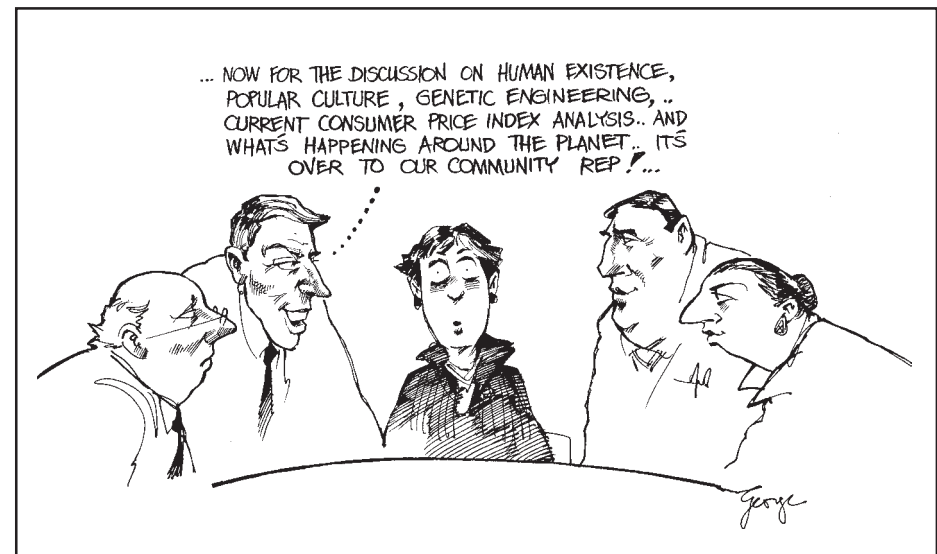


SECTION
1

You may have noticed that governments and bureaucracies are increasingly supporting the call for communities to participate in all types of decision-making about service planning, delivery and evaluation. Just what community participation is can mean very different things to different people. Broadly speaking, participation means the involvement of people in decisions that affect their lives. It is about health and welfare services, Local Government, education, housing services etc.

what is participation?

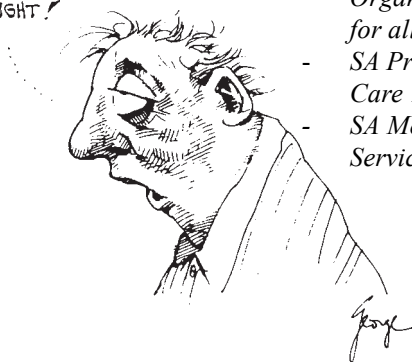
It acknowledges the importance of consulting with communities about their needs, and satisfaction with services, policies, structures and programmes. Community participation is about change, and therefore is difficult at times and demands patience. It has a very important role to play in ensuring change is appropriate to circumstances.



“real participation means joint problem solving, joint decision making, joint responsibility”

Within the Health System, community participation has been supported at the international, national and state levels, in policy document eg.

WHO DO I TALK TO ABOUT EXCESSIVE TRAFFIC NOISE AT NIGHT!



- Ottawa Charter for International Health Promotion 1986.
- World Health Organisation 'Health for all' strategy.
- SA Primary Health Care Policy.
- SA Metro Health Services plan



Consulter

4. Make available resources for effective consultation; staff with relevant skills and knowledge; fund for preparing written materials; advertising; child care; interpreting and transport; funding for facilitator/s for meetings; resources for relevant groups and organisations to collect information for the consultation.

5. Discuss details of any public meetings with relevant groups ie. venue, times, speakers.

6. Make material and information available in languages other than English where relevant.

7. Be realistic about the results of a Consultation: what is being changed? What are consequences for the community? What is the motivation for the changes?

8. Be clear and honest, about whether you are having a public meeting to inform people of decisions already made, or are holding a consultation for input to intended changes.

9. Report back publicly on outcomes by: describing how responses are made to the information received, how implementation of any recommendations will happen, why decisions have been made.

Consultee

4. Make suggestions to help. Get as many people involved as possible. Find out if there's money for translations, photocopying, mailing, travel, childcare.

5. Turn up to public meetings where possible. If you know the time, place or speakers are not right, let the organisers know.

6. If you know translations would be useful, then ask for them as consulters may not know about a particular communities needs.

7. Know the limits of a consultation. Don't be too disheartened if nothing seems to happen straight away. Remember that networking and information exchange are still useful.

8. Check that your views have been reported accurately.

9. Question how effective implementation of the outcomes will happen. Keep questioning.

*The not
so complete
guidelines to
community
consultation*

Consulter

1. Write a brief, clear statement on the consultation in plain language and include a summary of any background information.
 - find out if something similar has already been done and
 - build on it rather than repeat
 - include what is, and what is not negotiable and why
 - who is thought to be affected by the proposal and how you intend to contact them
 - spell out what kind of input is being sought, eg. comments on existing proposals or activities, information on needs or likely demand for a service etc. *Make this public.*
 - make clear what the information is being used for and who is collecting it.

2. Make sure there is enough time for people to respond. Take into account most people are not 'working' full time on the issue(s).

3. Make sure you vary the methods of consultation. Try small discussion groups, telephone hotlines, surveys and questionnaires, public meetings, door knocking, etc.

Consultee

1. If you know the consultation is covering the same ground as before then give the details to the organiser. Remember, you're the one who often knows the issues best.

2. Get hold of written material, especially anything that spells out what's wanted. Get as much background information as you can and talk to as many people as possible.

3. Take as much time as you need, especially if you feel you need to talk to others. Answer the way you feel comfortable. The right questions may not have been asked.

*"...it means people
in the community
being involved in
the planning and
delivery of health
services..."*

Health & Social Welfare Councils
Program Manual

*"...it can also
involve action to
promote health..."*

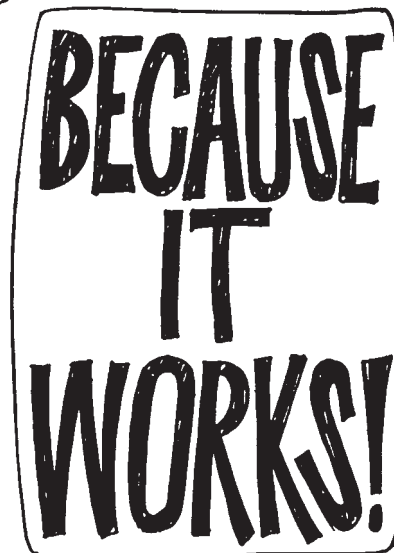
Health & Social Welfare Councils
Program Manual

Each of these documents reflect the view that community members have an important role to play at a range of levels. You may find it useful to refer to these to 'lend weight' to your involvement, or to gain inspiration!

why participate?



- Because it does make a difference.
- Because it can be constructive.
- Because recognising real need is important.
- Because services need to be accountable to the community they serve.
- Because we can push for real improvements.
- Because we are committed to positive change.
- Because we have the right to be healthy.
- Because it can make things better for others.
- Because we can work with others who share similar goals.



what the participants said

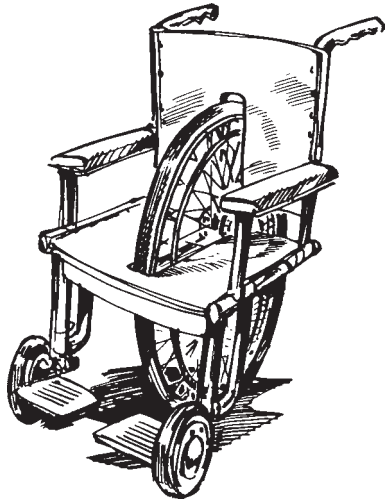
“...involvement of the general public in decision making...is fundamental to effective health promotion and illness prevention.”

SA Health Commission
Social Health Strategy

“...it’s about achieving justice and about our ability to participate at all levels...”

Mental Illness Awareness Council
Consumer Participation

“If it wasn’t for this group, I’d still be at home making phone calls in isolation”



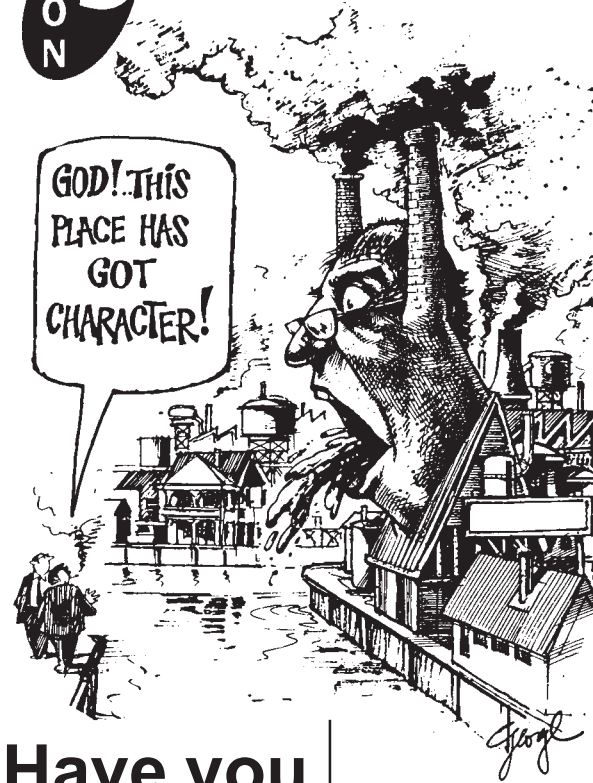
“I’ve always wanted to just stand up and say I think we could do it differently”

“It’s important they know what it’s like at our end”

“Change is there happening, but it’s slow”



SECTION 5



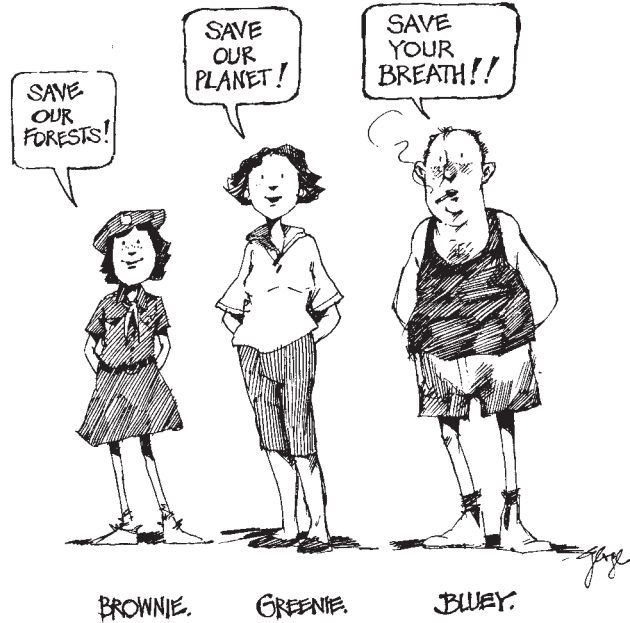
**Have you
been
consulted
lately?**

Whether you’re a Rep or not, you may one day ‘be consulted’. This section is included to assist you in this process. There is information for both the Consulter and Consultee, meant as an introduction and guide of what you can reasonably expect from each other.

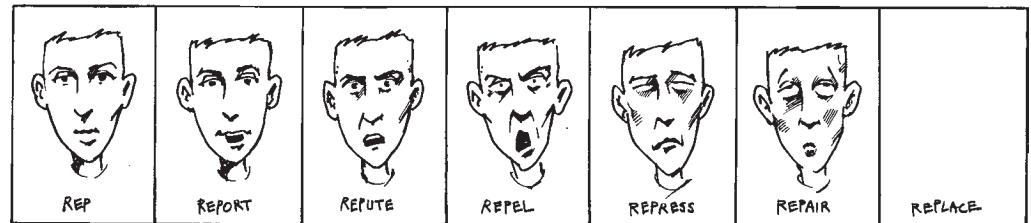
This section is drawn directly from the North West Suburbs Health & Social Welfare Councils, (1991) *Consultation Principles and Protocol*. In these Principles and Protocol, consultation is defined as *‘a process of openly looking at options about policies, programmes and practices’*. Consultation relies on exchanging information between organisations and the people they serve.

Community consultation is only one element of community involvement, and all too often is an element which borders on informing communities, rather than a real partnership between Consulters and Consultees.

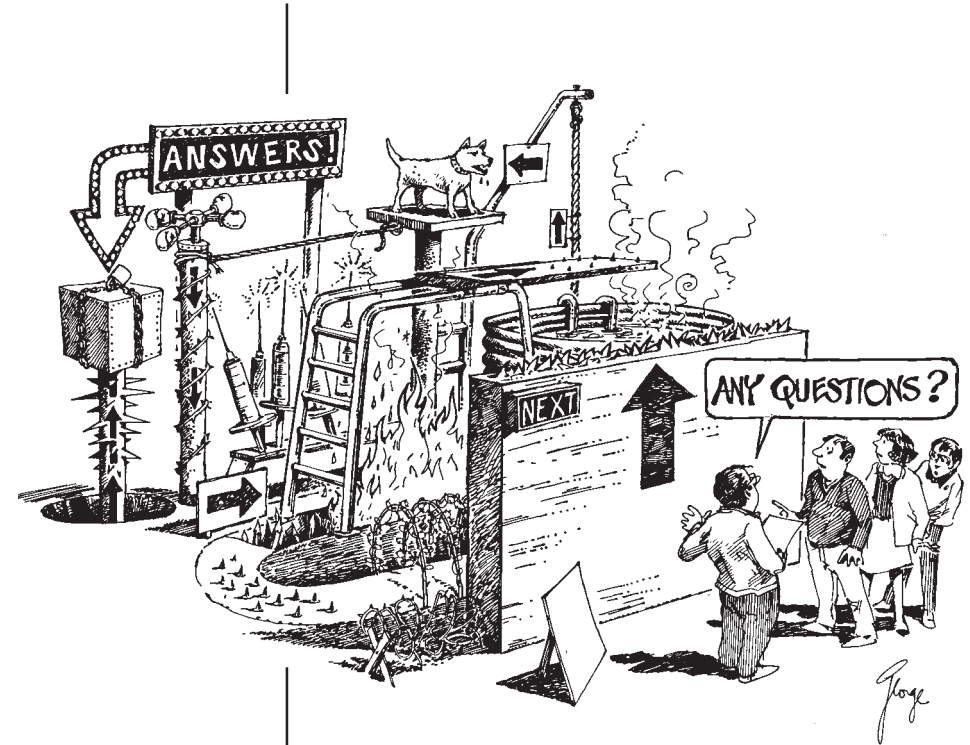
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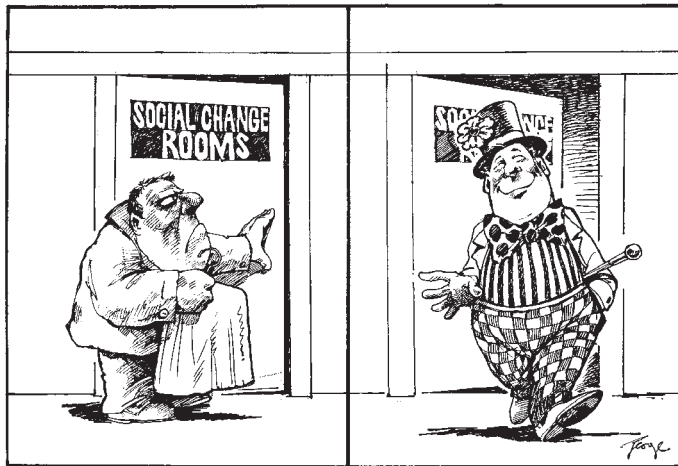
...AS YOUR NEWLY APPOINTED REPRESENTATIVE
AND WITH YOUR TOTAL, INDUBITABLE SUPPORT,
I SAY LET'S MARCH FORWARD, TOGETHER...



*“Excuse me while
I just raise your
awareness”*



*“there has
been a real
culture shift”*



Quotes from workshop participants:
Not Just A Token Rep

who do I represent?

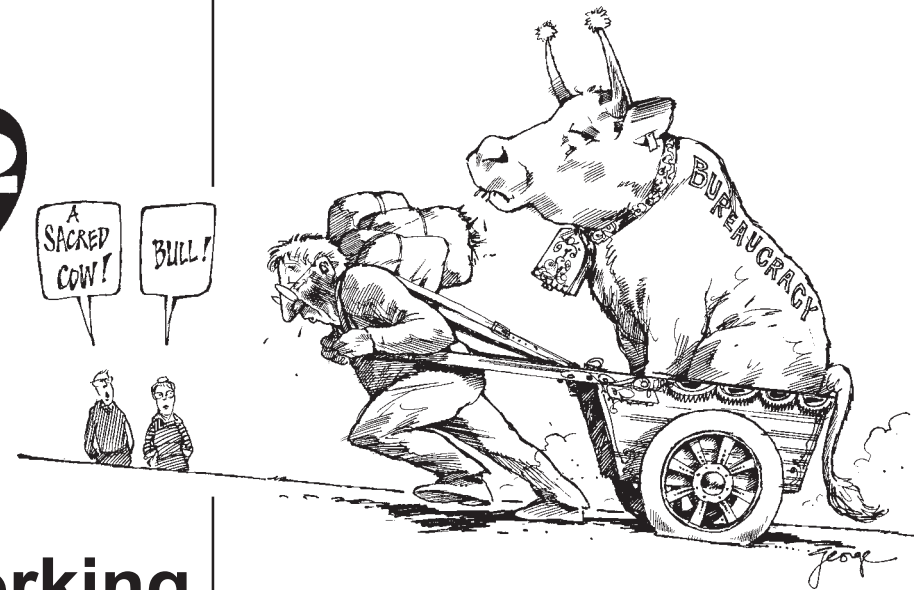


Some community groups are asked to provide a Rep for a committee, and in this case everyone is clear about who this person is representing.

However, it is not possible to have one person representing all members of all communities, nor is it possible to have all communities (and the divisions within those communities) represented.

As a community Rep you can only hope to provide a community view, and undertake to consult with a limited range of people. Some Reps find it useful to consult with an already existing community group, or to form a group of interested people to consult.

SECTION 2



working outside

the system

Working within the system as a Rep is a way to seek change to the system. However there will always be a need for people to work outside the system, or a combination of both.

Working outside can include community action, working with other groups (eg. churches, unions, environment groups), lobbying Members of Parliament and so on. One major difference is that you do not have to accept the limits put on you by the system. It may be more expedient to define the problem or the solution in your own terms. Working outside the system allows you to set your own direction and pace. This may put you at odds with the system you wish to change.

I'M PREPARED TO ATTEND MEETINGS ON LOCAL HEALTH ISSUES AS LONG AS THEY'RE HELD AT THE PUB AND I CAN SMOKE !!

“What we are saying is that we need to change the way things



To make change happen requires different approaches. These approaches will vary depending on different sorts of things.

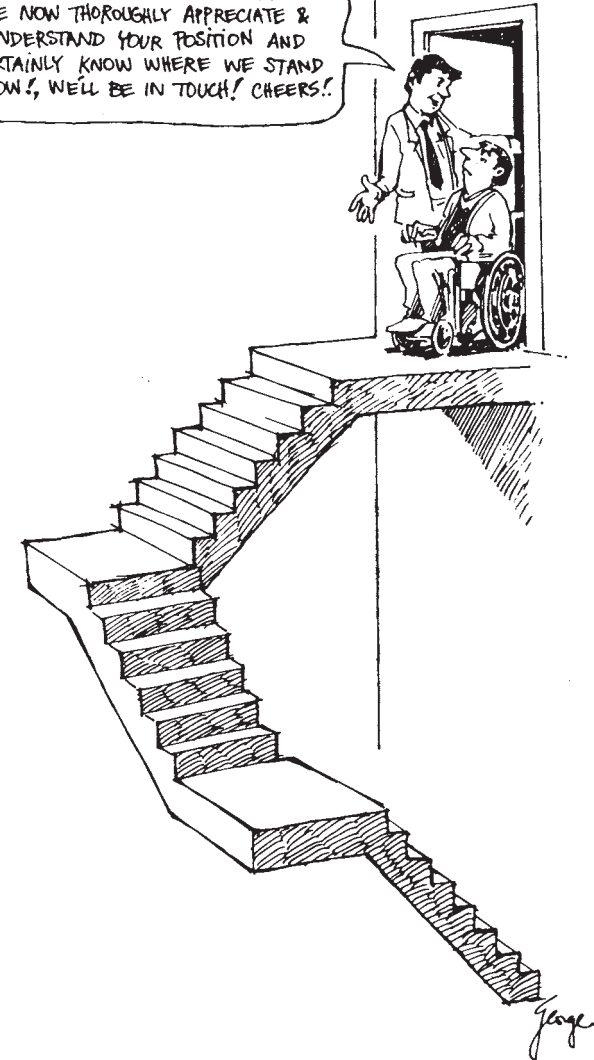
- how strongly do people feel about the issue?
- is there time available? (is it urgent?)
- how politically difficult or easy is the issue?
- how strong is the opposition?
- is there any money available?
- is there a group who can help?

For example, suppose you or members of your local community wanted to get a neighbourhood house in the area. You've probably started outside the system, because that's where most of us spend most of our time.

A way to start is to find out if anybody else is working on the same thing. You may find a committee, planning group or some other group. You could join as a Rep and become 'part' of the system. On the other hand you may become frustrated with a committee and decide that community action is a better alternative.

Quote from workshop participant

.. AND THANKS FOR YOUR INPUT!..
.. IT WAS A VERY VALUABLE CONTRIBUTION..
WE NOW THOROUGHLY APPRECIATE & UNDERSTAND YOUR POSITION AND CERTAINLY KNOW WHERE WE STAND NOW!, WE'LL BE IN TOUCH! CHEERS!.



reconsidering your goals

- ❖ How long have you been a Rep and felt that your contributions have not been included?
- ❖ Try to define ‘the problem’ from your own perspective.
- ❖ What have been the benefits of being involved? Do they outweigh the problems?
- ❖ Speak to the Chairperson about it, or other members of the committee. Ask them to clarify why the committee wanted a community Rep.
- ❖ If you are not satisfied with the response of the chairperson or committee, is there someone the committee is responsible to who could be contacted about your concerns?
- ❖ If you are finding it increasingly difficult to achieve your goals it might be time to consider the following:
 - establish a support group
 - request that another community Rep position be created.
- ❖ Set yourself a time limit to work towards improvements, eg. 3 – 6 more meetings.
- ❖ If it is still important for you to continue regardless of the above, you could make a presentation to the chair, organization, or other authority as to your reasons for dissatisfaction. Enlist your support group (if you have one) for assistance concerning the best way to go. Listen to advice from the support group.
- ❖ If it is clear that regardless of what you do, the committee will not value your participation, you can resign in writing, and clearly outline the reasons.
- ❖ If all else fails, perhaps it is time for a break. Sometimes Reps form or attend another type of committee where they feel their work is put to better use.

If you are having consistent trouble to the point where you feel you're wasting your time, or that it just shouldn't be this hard, then this checklist may be of help.

community action

Almost anything goes. That's the point – you and your community are in control. Often community action starts with a wider group of people, in this case interested in a neighbourhood house, forming to create a strong and local voice. This might involve planning a campaign which involves lobbying:

- the local council about setting up a community house
- Members of Parliament for funding
- local service groups and business groups for support
- local and state health and Welfare services.

...and raising the issue in local media.

“People should talk and discuss the politics”

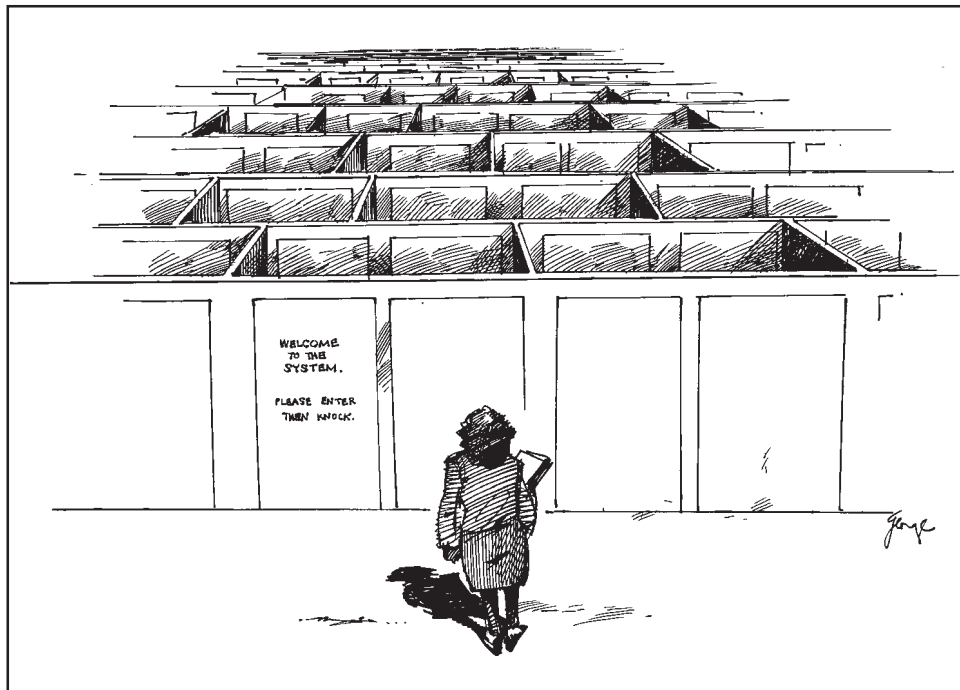


Quote from workshop participant

During your work for a community house you, or one of the people you've worked with may be invited to join a committee or planning group to represent your community. This committee may be looking at the broader issues in local or regional planning – who gets what, when and why? In joining a committee that looks at services or planning of local facilities in your area, you have entered the system.

On entering you may get a look at the broader view, and influence positive change. Or you may not!

Deciding on the right approach for the issue(s) you are dealing with the million dollar question. You might decide to work within the system and campaign outside of it at the same time. It is worth remembering though, that change can be a long and slow process and at different times different approaches will be more successful.



"I was told 'you don't qualify'"



Given this, and some of the barriers previously mentioned, many Reps find it useful, it not essential, to organise support for themselves.

In your committee it may be that some individuals do not accept that members of the community have the ability or the right to participate. In this case you can feel your views are constantly dismissed or discounted.

If as a Rep this is your experience, then it is worth re-considering both your goals, and why the committee wanted a community Rep to participate.



when our views don't count

Community participation is about change. Until recently, decision-making processes have been occupied solely by professionals. Community participation provides more balance to discussion and to decision making. Changing the traditional power imbalance is something which can be difficult and will take a long time.



SECTION 3

I'VE BEEN THROUGH THE UNIVERSITY YOU KNOW!

YEAH!...PLEASANT STROLL ISN'T IT ?!



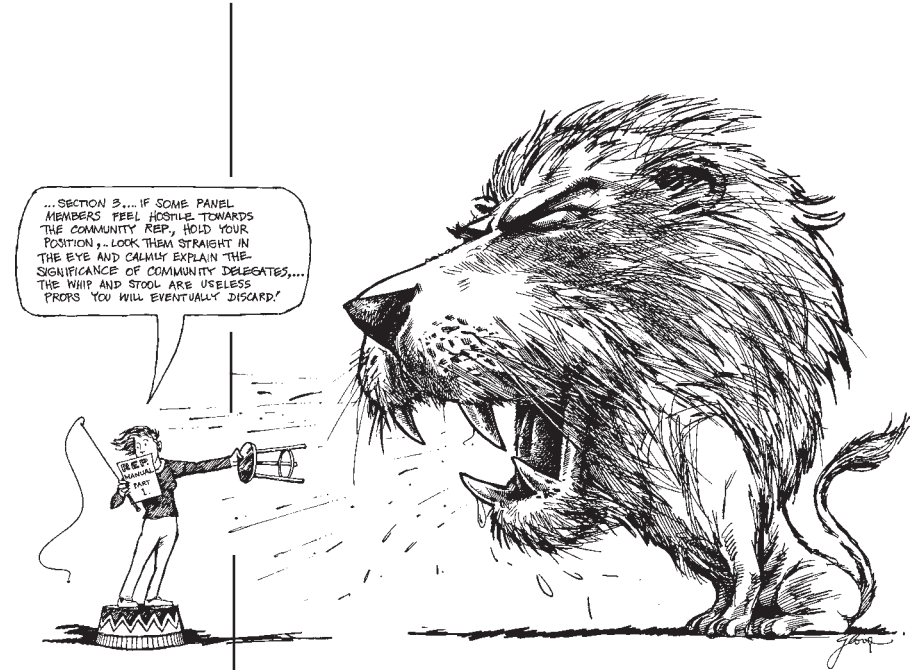
**a
ladder
of
participation**

CITIZEN CONTROL.....
DELEGATED POWER.....
PARTNERSHIP.....
PLACATION.....

As discussed earlier, participation can be defined in many ways, depending on who is defining it and why. One useful way of picturing it is as a ladder. The ladder of participation, developed in 1969 by Sherry Arnstein, shows levels of participation, from non-participation through to citizen control.

It is interesting to see that ‘consultation’ is only halfway up this ladder. At the end of this book we have included a checklist for Consulters, and for Consultees to help ensure that consultations are

Ladder based on information from “A Ladder of Citizen Participation” S R Arnstein



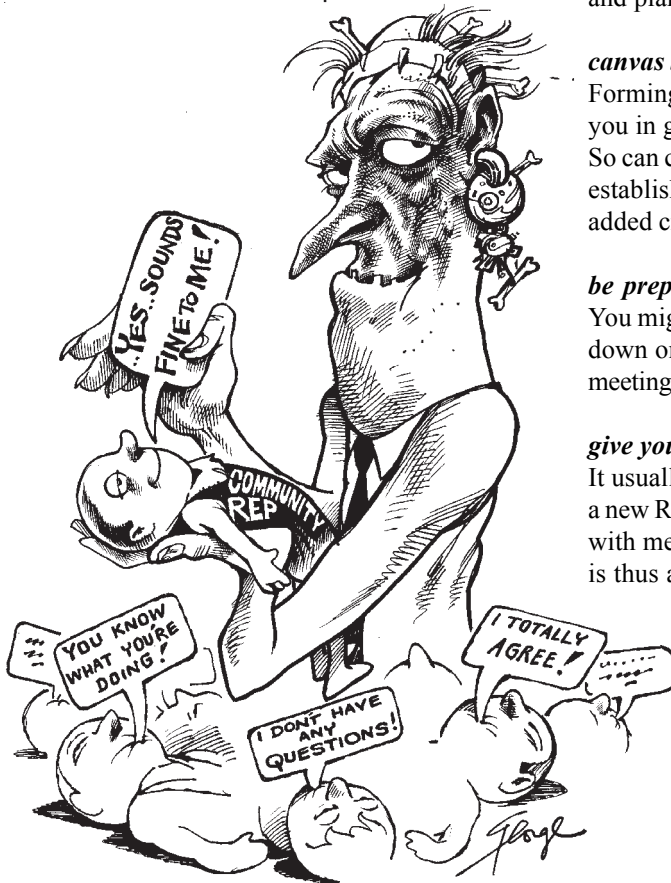
**“Childcare...
Childcare! You
would’ve though
I’d put a poeey
nappy in the
centre of the
table!”**

find allies

Find someone on the committee who is supportive and talk to them before speaking to the committee.

remember you don’t have to know all the answers

If you don’t understand what is going on, then there is a good chance that others don’t either!



remember everyone makes mistakes
(yes, even those on your committee) Try not to worry about saying the wrong thing. Spend some time before the meeting thinking about what you want to say and planning how you could say it.

canvas issues
Forming a support group could help you in gaining a broader perspective. So can communicating with an already established group. This can also give added credibility to your participation.

be prepared
You might want to write your ideas down on paper and present them to the meeting.

give yourself time
It usually takes several meetings before a new Rep feels comfortable and familiar with meeting procedures or issues, and is thus able to speak up.

is where members of communities (citizens) make all decisions on what is to be done and how it is to be done, having control every step of the way.

is where communities become the dominant decision-making authority over a particular plan or programme.

at this level power is redistributed between communities and traditional decision makers. There is joint decision making and planning, accountability and responsibility.

can be seen where an organisation is ready to listen to people but not fully prepared to act for real change.

CONSULTING has many definitions. At best it allows for ongoing mechanisms for community participation to be built in. At worst it is when an organisation tries to promote a plan or get communities to support a non-negotiable proposal. You get the feeling its being done to you.

INFORMING is when you get the information, are told the plans and expected to agree. A one way flow of information with less opportunity to give feedback and less power to negotiate.

THERAPY is where individuals are considered to need curing, rather than focusing on changing external constraints.

MANIPULATION is where community members are 'educated', persuaded and advised by officials. They have no power.



How to be heard

“When I finally spoke up and said I was confused about what was going on, I found out half of the committee didn’t know either!”



raring to go?

If you decide to join a committee and feel it meets your goals, then you have an important reason for being there. It could be the beginning of some exciting changes!

It is important not to sit back, but to develop ways to get your views across. There are some things which may assist you do this:

get to know your committee

Make sure you know the names of people on the committee (including their positions and organisations). Consider whether the chair is creating a safe environment for all to speak. Suggesting a less formal meeting to get to know each other can help this process.

*check list
for
Chairs*

- ❖ Welcome the Rep. Make sure all Reps are introduced to other people on the committee. Name tags might help.
- ❖ Has the Rep been offered assistance with childcare, transport, phone calls, stationery and sitting fees if necessary?
- ❖ Explain to the committee the reason a Rep is involved and what is expected, who they represent and why.
- ❖ Explain to the Rep why all other members are involved and what is expected of them.
- ❖ Does the Rep understand meeting procedures? If the meeting is formal then the Chair can help take the mystery out of motions and amendments by explaining what's going on.
- ❖ If the Rep position is new, or the Rep is new to the business of Rep-ing, some special attention may be needed to facilitate their involvement. Jumping on rude behaviour of other committee members, explaining jargon and abbreviations, is important.
- ❖ Does the Rep know 'how things are done around here'? Does this need to change to enable the Rep to participate?
- ❖ When a Rep speaks, ensure they have had the opportunity to fully express their viewpoint. Listen and explore their ideas too.
- ❖ Does the Rep have relevant and clearly presented background information on the Committee, or an item on the Agenda? Is there anything you can do to ensure this information is provided.
- ❖ Is the committee clear on what process is followed if there is disagreement or conflict? If there is none, it is wise to develop a process before you are in the midst of conflict.
- ❖ Make an effort to ask how the Rep is experiencing being involved, and if there is anything you can do to improve this.

**SECTION
4**



In developing this booklet we have learnt a great deal about some of the problems community Reps have come across in the course of their involvement.

In this section we outline some ideas people have come up with to assist Reps to be more effective.

Firstly, there are some common reasons why people find it difficult to be a Rep. If these are addressed it can make a big difference.

Being Effective



Just Getting There No payment, no childcare, no disability access, transport difficulties, and not much time!

The Way Meeting are Run Unfamiliarity with meeting procedures, how decisions are made, long agenda, changing meeting times, inadequate explanations. Sometimes trouble even getting a work in!

Jargon or Expert Terms Language that is developed by, and usually only relevant to a particular field, can make it difficult to contribute. If English is your second or third language, it's even harder.

Communicating with Professionals A Community Rep's views on so called 'professional issues' are sometimes considered uninformed, and so may be discounted by individuals in a group. A Rep's purpose is to put a community view, not to know *all* about professional issues, nor to have all the answers. Put downs are common.

Lack of Confidence Reps often have to get used to unfamiliar environments, exclusive mateship of other members, and in-jokes. Some forms of body language are a challenge to confidence and the ability to contribute, for example, when people throw their eyes around, interrupt, or walk out when the Community Rep is about to speak.

"I was afraid to ask questions"

"I couldn't get a word in!"

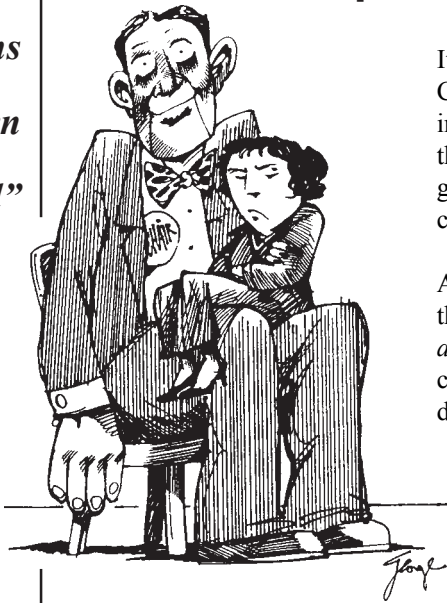


...NOW DOES ANYBODY ELSE HAVE ANYTHING THEY WANT TO ADD ?!!



the role of a chairperson is crucial

“It was 14 months before I was even introduced”



It is clear that the Chairperson has a very important role in ensuring the committee makes a genuine effort to involve community Reps.

As facilitator, the Chair has the responsibility to help *all* members of the committee to participate in decision making.

“took a long time to get used to the meeting environment”

... EXCUSE ME! ... MY NAME IS ... AS A CONSUMER REP I THINK ... I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT THAT MEANS! ...
... NO, MY NAME IS ... I HAVE A QUESTION..
... THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT! ... COULD YOU EXPLAIN ... I'D LIKE TO SAY THAT...
... WHY? ... HOW MUCH? ... WHEN?



Hidden Agenda Personal or political hidden interests of members can dominate decision making without the Rep knowing.

The Effectiveness of the Committee It may not have the resources or the authority to have decisions acted upon.

Lack of Information Sometimes too much information to digest with too little time allowed for it.

Pace Problems The pace of the committee can be too fast if you're the only one not being paid to keep up. Sometimes the action or change you are wanting can be too slow, especially if you are directly affected by the decisions.

It's Hard Work Requiring patience, good communication skills, persistence and super-human commitment.

I WANT TO CREATE A FRIENDLY, RELAXED & INFORMAL ATMOSPHERE FOR DISCUSSION!



From our Reps' experiences comes the following recommended checklist to consider before saying 'yes' to joining a committee.

- 1. what are your goals...**
What do you want to achieve in your community, for yourself, or for your family or friends?
- 2. can the committee help achieve your goals...**
How is your involvement on the committee or Board going to help achieve your goal?
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. _____
- 3. can it happen within your lifetime**
It's okay, and sometimes essential, to set yourself a time limit – even if the goals aren't fully achieved in that time.
- 4. will the committee support you to participate...**

	YES/NO
childcare	_____
sitting fees	_____
travel costs	_____
orientation & background information	_____
a 'buddy' to discuss problems	_____
clear information as you need it	_____
interpreting	_____

CHECKLIST

5. do the expectations of the committee suit you..

When are the meetings?

How many hours will you have to put in per week/per month/per year?

How much reading will there be?

Do you have the skills required?
If not, how can you get them?

6. what further support do you need...

Is there an outgoing rep you can talk to?

Who supports the committee? Is there an Executive Officer you can speak to?

Are there other community members or Groups you can consult with or get Support from?

Are there possibilities for attending courses, Or conferences or learning new skills?

CHECKLIST