# Partnering with Consumers to Improve Emergency Care Research

## Background

Professor Diana Egerton-Warburton is a passionate advocate for patient and community involvement in healthcare. As a senior emergency physician at Monash Health and clinician researcher at Monash University, Diana co-chairs the Monash Emergency Research Collaborative. In this role, she leads emergency care research and implementation across Victoria's largest health service, overseeing more than 500 active research and quality improvement projects across five Emergency Departments and a team with over 35 researchers.

Her research focuses on pragmatic, patient-centred approaches that influence clinical practice. From the outset, her grant applications are co-designed with consumers to ensure the research addresses questions that matter not only to clinicians but also to patients and the broader community. Importantly, her studies measure outcomes that are meaningful to consumers.

## About Consumer Advisory Panels

Consumer Advisory Panels (CAPs) are committees composed of consumers and community representatives who provide input on research projects. Members offer insights based on lived experience, advocate for specific health conditions, raise awareness, and represent consumer perspectives in various forums. Given the multidisciplinary and wide-ranging nature of emergency care research, a standing CAP with diverse membership was identified as the most effective engagement model.

## About the Project

The Emergency Care CAP supported the "Just Say No, to the Just in Case Cannula" initiative, which promotes safer use of peripheral intravenous cannulas (PIVCs). These devices often cause discomfort and carry risks of infection and other complications. The project's key message is to avoid inserting a cannula unless it is clinically necessary. Reducing unnecessary PIVCs improves patient outcomes, reduces healthcare costs, and lessens environmental impact.

## Establishing the CAP

Recognising the need for broad consumer input, the research team chose a CAP model to guide emergency care research priorities. Key steps included:

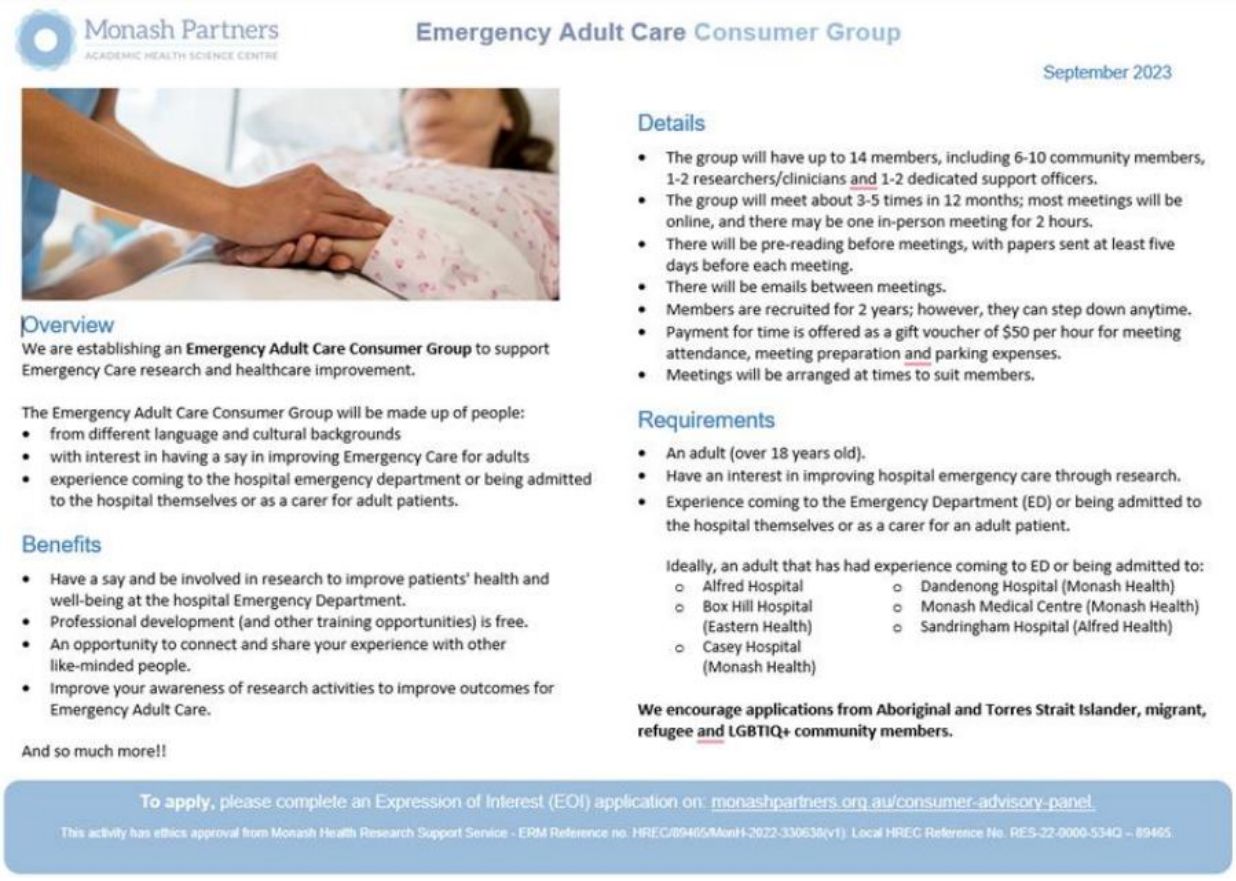
1. Defining the CAP's Purpose with clearly articulated goals and objectives
    - Advise on adult emergency health research.
    - Provide feedback on future research and healthcare improvement.
    - Guide communication strategies for sharing research outcomes.

2. Setting Membership Criteria:
    - Adults aged 18+, carers, and family members with lived experience in emergency care.
    - Reflecting community diversity in age, culture, disability, and geography.

3. Creating Governance Structures:
    - Advise on adult emergency health research. Drafting Terms of Reference covering remuneration, meeting formats, and member expectations.
    - Developing an Involvement Agreement outlining roles, confidentiality, and conduct expectations (see below).

4. Recruitment:
    - Developing promotional material: posters, social media content and other material to attract interest (see example below).
    - Using an Expression of Interest (EOI) process to recruit members (see below).
    - Recruitment through: Existing consumer networks, Monash Partners' connections, local health service advertising.

*Example of flyer promoting the opportunity:*



Monash Partners
ACADEMIC HEALTH SCIENCE CENTRE

**Emergency Adult Care Consumer Group**

September 2023

## Overview

We are establishing an **Emergency Adult Care Consumer Group** to support Emergency Care research and healthcare improvement.

The Emergency Adult Care Consumer Group will be made up of people:

- from different language and cultural backgrounds
- with interest in having a say in improving Emergency Care for adults
- experience coming to the hospital emergency department or being admitted to the hospital themselves or as a carer for adult patients.

## Benefits

- Have a say and be involved in research to improve patients' health and well-being at the hospital Emergency Department.
- Professional development (and other training opportunities) is free.
- An opportunity to connect and share your experience with other like-minded people.
- Improve your awareness of research activities to improve outcomes for Emergency Adult Care.

And so much more!!

## Details

- The group will have up to 14 members, including 6-10 community members, 1-2 researchers/clinicians and 1-2 dedicated support officers.
- The group will meet about 3-5 times in 12 months; most meetings will be online, and there may be one in-person meeting for 2 hours.
- There will be pre-reading before meetings, with papers sent at least five days before each meeting.
- There will be emails between meetings.
- Members are recruited for 2 years; however, they can step down anytime.
- Payment for time is offered as a gift voucher of $50 per hour for meeting attendance, meeting preparation and parking expenses.
- Meetings will be arranged at times to suit members.

## Requirements

- An adult (over 18 years old).
- Have an interest in improving hospital emergency care through research.
- Experience coming to the Emergency Department (ED) or being admitted to the hospital themselves or as a carer for an adult patient.

Ideally, an adult that has had experience coming to ED or being admitted to:

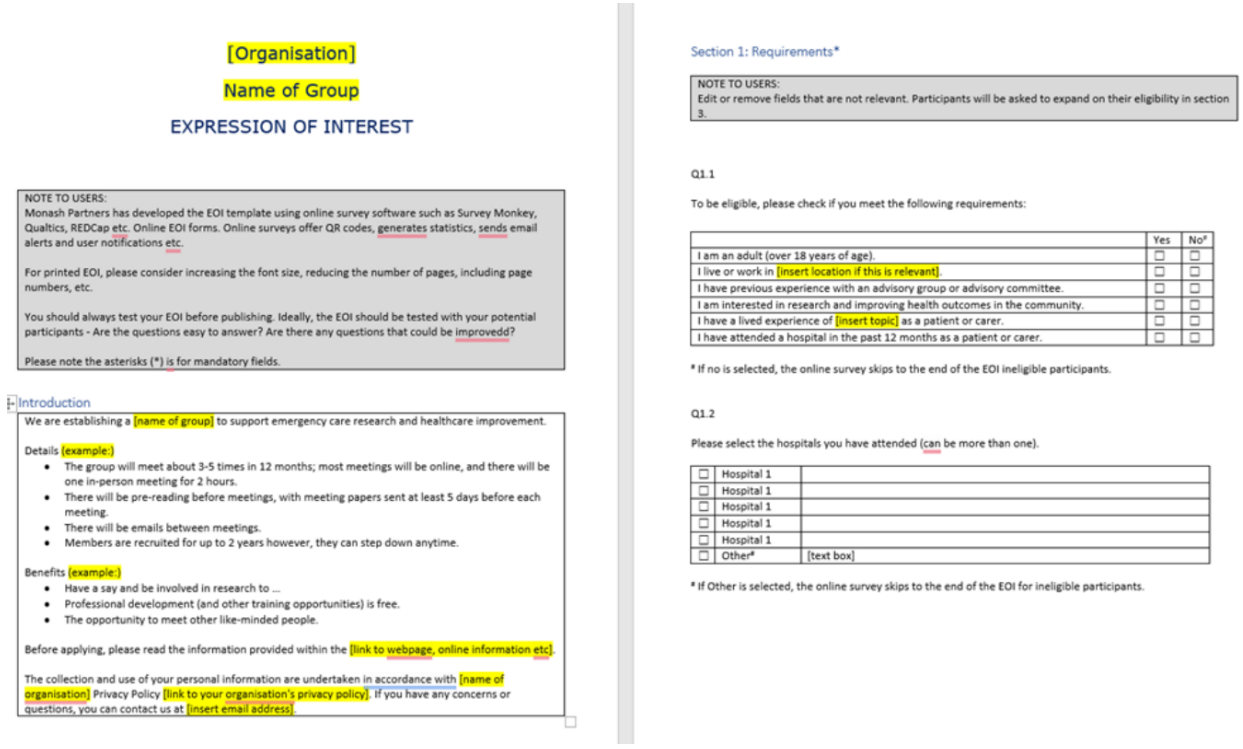
- Alfred Hospital
- Box Hill Hospital (Eastern Health)
- Casey Hospital (Monash Health)
- Dandenong Hospital (Monash Health)
- Monash Medical Centre (Monash Health)
- Sandringham Hospital (Alfred Health)

**We encourage applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, migrant, refugee and LGBTIQ+ community members.**

**To apply,** please complete an Expression of Interest (EOI) application on: monashpartners.org.au/consumer-advisory-panel

This activity has ethics approval from Monash Health Research Support Service - ERM Reference no. HREC/89465/MonH-2022-330638(v1); Local HREC Reference No. RES-22-0000-534Q – 89465.

*Example of an Expression of Interest (EOI) form:*



[Organisation]

Name of Group

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

NOTE TO USERS:
Monash Partners has developed the EOI template using online survey software such as Survey Monkey, Qualtics, REDCap etc. Online EOI forms. Online surveys offer QR codes, generates statistics, sends email alerts and user notifications etc.

For printed EOI, please consider increasing the font size, reducing the number of pages, including page numbers, etc.

You should always test your EOI before publishing. Ideally, the EOI should be tested with your potential participants - Are the questions easy to answer? Are there any questions that could be improvedd?

Please note the asterisks (*) is for mandatory fields.

Introduction

We are establishing a [name of group] to support emergency care research and healthcare improvement.

Details (example:)

- The group will meet about 3-5 times in 12 months; most meetings will be online, and there will be one in-person meeting for 2 hours.
- There will be pre-reading before meetings, with meeting papers sent at least 5 days before each meeting.
- There will be emails between meetings.
- Members are recruited for up to 2 years however, they can step down anytime.

Benefits (example:)

- Have a say and be involved in research to ...
- Professional development (and other training opportunities) is free.
- The opportunity to meet other like-minded people.

Before applying, please read the information provided within the [link to webpage, online information etc].

The collection and use of your personal information are undertaken in accordance with [name of organisation] Privacy Policy [link to your organisation's privacy policy]. If you have any concerns or questions, you can contact us at [insert email address].

Section 1: Requirements*

NOTE TO USERS:
Edit or remove fields that are not relevant. Participants will be asked to expand on their eligibility in section 3.

Q1.1

To be eligible, please check if you meet the following requirements:

| | Yes | No* |
|---|---|---|
| I am an adult (over 18 years of age). | ☐ | ☐ |
| I live or work in [insert location if this is relevant]. | ☐ | ☐ |
| I have previous experience with an advisory group or advisory committee. | ☐ | ☐ |
| I am interested in research and improving health outcomes in the community. | ☐ | ☐ |
| I have a lived experience of [insert topic] as a patient or carer. | ☐ | ☐ |
| I have attended a hospital in the past 12 months as a patient or carer. | ☐ | ☐ |

* If no is selected, the online survey skips to the end of the EOI ineligible participants.

Q1.2

Please select the hospitals you have attended (can be more than one).

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ | Hospital 1 | |
| ☐ | Hospital 1 | |
| ☐ | Hospital 1 | |
| ☐ | Hospital 1 | |
| ☐ | Hospital 1 | |
| ☐ | Other* | [text box] |

* If Other is selected, the online survey skips to the end of the EOI for ineligible participants.

## Engaging the Panel

Applicants were screened and interviewed to assess their suitability. Panel members received formal invitations and signed an involvement agreement outlining roles, confidentiality, and conduct expectations. The first meeting was held face-to-face to build relationships and rapport. EOIs helped form a diverse panel representing varied backgrounds and experiences. A dedicated contact person supported members throughout the process. Consumers with lived experience of serious PIVC complications were equal partners in the research team, co-designing project aims and contributing to clinician education.

*Sample Involvement Agreement:*



Monash Partners

Monash Partners
Academic Health Science Centre
Level 1, 553 St Kilda Road, Melbourne VIC 3004
Email: info@monashpartners.org.au
A.C.N 158 868 083

Monash Partners

Emergency Adult Care Consumer Group

Involvement Agreement v2

Background

Monash Partners is an alliance between leading health service, research and teaching organisations. It is an accredited National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Research Translation Centre.

Monash Partners is a member of the Australian Health Research Alliance (AHRA) made up of all NHMRC accredited Research Translation Centres. Considered to be centres of excellence, they foster national collaboration for better health.

The Emergency Adult Care Consumer Group supports emergency care research and healthcare improvement. The Emergency Adult Care Consumer Group is made up of people:

- from different language and cultural backgrounds
- with an interest in having a say in emergency adult care
- with experience coming to the hospital emergency department or being admitted to the hospital themselves or as a carer for adult patients.

The Emergency Adult Care Consumer Group supports the delivery of a range of research activities. These include:

- helping to set priorities for emergency health research
- assisting with the development of consumer facing study materials
- assisting with current projects for emergency research.

Purpose of the Emergency Adult Care Consumer Group

- Provide advice and input into a range of adult emergency health research projects and activities.
- Provide feedback on future health research and healthcare improvement activities.
- Advise on strategies to communicate the results of research with the wider community.

Partners

Our Associate Partners

monashpartners.org.au



Consumers and Community Representatives (Consumers) are important to the research process. Involving consumers improves transparency and openness, leading to more useful research outcomes. Consumers are NOT employed by Monash Partners. Consumers will be compensated for their time.[1]

Code of conduct

Behaviour

- Behave honestly and with integrity.
- Act with due care and diligence.
- Follow all applicable Australian laws.
- Treat people equally and respectfully, regardless of culture, gender, age, or other features.
- Encourage collaboration, communication and respect between members of the CAP.
- Participate in the decision-making process outlined in the Terms of Reference.

Conflict of Interest

Members must declare when they believe they have a conflict of interest. This must be recorded in the Minutes of the Meeting.

Confidentiality

Members should:

- not share materials or verbal conversations beyond the Consumer Advisory Panel. If unsure, members must check and seek clarification from the relevant support staff or researcher.
- be aware that information could have commercial, clinical or privacy implications.

Publications

- The research lead and research project manager must review and approval all publications (including media releases) before release.
- Authors must include an acknowledgement of the funding body and the contribution of other researchers.
- Maintain standards relating to copyright and intellectual property.

Roles and Responsibilities

Please read the Terms of Reference, which outlines the roles and responsibilities for all members.

Involvement Agreement v2_October 2023

## Key Success Factors

Several elements contributed to the success of the Emergency Care Consumer Advisory Panel:

- **Thoughtful recruitment**
  As a long-term advisory panel, participation required a careful assessment of needs. Recruitment focused on ensuring compatibility, diversity and inclusion.

- **Establishing a healthy team environment**
  Success was supported by setting clear expectations around the panel's purpose, scope of work, and member responsibilities. Power dynamics were addressed, and multiple communication channels were offered—including email, in-person meetings, and chat groups—to support accessibility.

- **Maintaining communication and feedback loops**
  Ongoing, two-way communication was essential to sustaining engagement and ensuring members felt heard and valued.

- **Offering multiple engagement mechanisms**
  A variety of engagement options were provided, including in-person and online meetings, phone and email contact, debrief sessions, and opportunities to give feedback—either anonymously or directly.

- **Building on existing relationships**
  Partnerships with consumers were grounded in existing, authentic relationships. These were further strengthened and nurtured throughout the project, supported by the Monash Partners Consumer and Community Involvement team.