

## MSAC Charter

The Multiple Sclerosis Advisory Council (MSAC) is a group of people with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) representing the needs and views of people with MS, their carers and families. MSAC reports to the Multiple Sclerosis Limited (MSL) Board.

### Overview

MSL believes that people with MS, their families and carers should be meaningfully engaged in issues about people with MS and about MSL. MSAC is the primary avenue for this consultation, with a focus on providing informed advice to the Board and Leadership Team.

Members of MSAC are in a unique position to provide a range of perspectives in relation to the quality and delivery of services, the needs and abilities of people with MS and the complex issues regarding the intersection of having MS and life activities - work, family, education, recreation, community and so forth.

The principle of consumer engagement in organisations is embodied in the Commonwealth Disability Services Act (1986) and the Disability Standards which underpin the Act, as well as in each of the relevant state and territory Acts. Equally importantly, consultation and genuine consumer, carer and community engagement are critical elements in fulfilling MSL's Vision and Mission.

World Health Organisation conventions such as the *Alma-Ata Declaration* (1978), the *Ottawa Charter* (1986) and the *Jakarta Declaration* (1997) identify the principle of community participation as 'critical to the development of systems which promote the health and wellbeing of communities'.

## **Purpose**

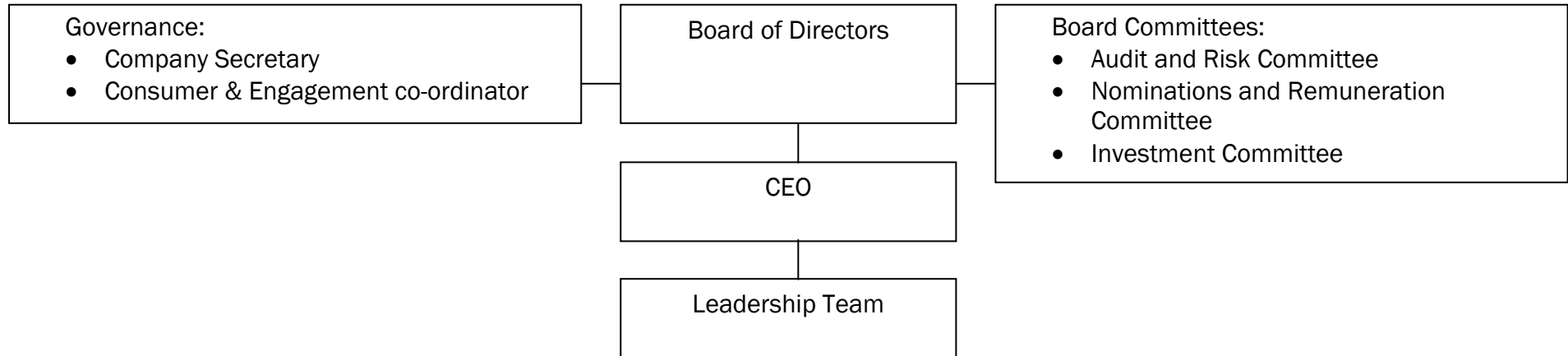
MSL has three MSACs'. MSAC is the representative body for people with MS. It serves as a direct voice on behalf of people with MS, their carers and families in the ACT, NSW and Victoria.

The role of MSAC is to consult with, and provide strategic advice to, the MSL Board, the CEO, and senior management team on a range of strategic and organisational developments in relation to service development and delivery, fundraising, public policy advocacy, and the media.

This consultation is focused on ensuring that MSL is effective and efficient in supporting and promoting the wellbeing of people with MS, their families and carers in relation to all of the above matters.

The MSL Board remains the governing body of the organisation. MSAC is an advisory committee to the MSL Board.

## Organisational Structure



### Board Committees

The Board has four standing Committees to assist in the development of Board policies and execution of the Board's responsibilities. These Committees are established to improve Board effectiveness and efficiency where activities require more concentrated effort and specialist skills and are an efficient use of Board resources. They do not abrogate any Directors from their responsibilities and Committees are obliged to properly inform the full Board of their activities. Any Director is free to attend any meeting of any Board Committee.

Each Committee has a charter describing its role and processes and these are regularly reviewed by the MSL Board. All standing Board Committees have a majority of non executive Directors and, from time to time, may have non-Board directors possessing special expertise and experience as members. Relevant members of the management team may, and usually do, attend appropriate Committee meetings. All Committees have a designated non-executive Director as chairman and a clear charter setting out objectives and responsibilities. All Committees keep proper minutes of their discussions and regularly report to the full Board on their activities and key issues. Standing Committee meetings and attendances are set out in the Company's annual report.

From time to time the Board may also establish ad hoc committees to assist with specific issues or projects. The Company's management is accountable to the Board Committees within the terms of the charters of the individual Committees.

## Objectives

So that optimal outcomes are achieved for the whole MS community, MSAC will:

- Identify the needs, views and issues of people with MS, their families and carers through consultation with a wide range of members of the MS community, including MSL clients.
- Advise MSL on strategic direction from a local, state, and national perspective and the development and deployment of public policy and organisational positions on a range of subjects.
- Provide the MSL Board and MSL Leadership Team with the direct perspective of people with MS, their families and carers in relation to internal and external initiatives and activities. Contribute to priority setting for MSL.

## Activities and Support

To achieve these objectives MSAC must have strong lines of communication with people with MS and their carers/families, the Board, and the Leadership Team of MSL and be able to develop well informed and well presented advice and proposals.

This will be best achieved through the provision of training, ongoing support and the assistance of a Consumer Carer and Engagement Coordinator. This support needs to be in the form of strategic, practical and administrative assistance. The role is defined in a Position Description for the Consumer Carer and Engagement Coordinator which will be reviewed and refreshed on an annual basis.

MSL will approve an annual operating budget for MSAC and the Consumer Carer and Engagement Coordinator. Members who incur travel, accommodation and reasonable out of pocket expenses associated with being a MSAC Member will be entitled to reimbursement by MSL. The budget will be distributed to each member at the beginning of each financial year.

Specifically, MSAC, its chair and members will, with the support of the Consumer Carer and Engagement Coordinator:

- Meet six times yearly. The members of MSAC will also convene ad hoc meetings as required and ongoing communication will be facilitated through the intranet, emails and teleconferencing for ongoing discussions and sharing of information.
- Through the MSAC Chair, invite and encourage MSL Board members and MSL Leadership Team members to attend state/territory MSAC meetings as observers to support the effective conduct of the Council.

- Be expected to be in touch with people with MS, their families and carers through a variety of means and on a regular basis. This work is vital as these people are the constituency which MSAC represents. It is expected that each MSAC member will utilise different means of staying in touch with people with MS and their families, depending on their circumstances.
- These means include, but are not be limited to:
  - Two meetings or forums annually with groups of people with MS and/or their families/carers,
  - A regular column in every edition of 'In Touch' outlining the work plans and actions undertaken by MSAC and seeking input from people with MS and their families or carers. Local newsletters and other communication opportunities should also be utilised.
  - An email address that people with MS and their families can access to submit issues, questions, concerns and the like ([advisorycommittee@mssociety.com.au](mailto:advisorycommittee@mssociety.com.au)). This facility will be promoted by all members and through other MSL communication mediums. Telephone access to the Consumer Carer and Engagement Coordinator will also be available so that those without web access will not be disadvantaged.
  - Space provided on the MSL website providing MSAC contact details for people with MS and their families to enable them to have appropriate dialogue with MSAC and its members. Copies of MSAC work plans, current and future directions of the Council, reports, member profiles, research results and links to other websites will also be included.
- Have portfolio responsibilities. These portfolios should be identified, prioritised and developed by MSAC in conjunction with the MSL Leadership Team and will cover a range of areas including service delivery, service development, carers/families, research, public policy advocacy, media coverage, fundraising and so on. Each portfolio will have a project brief and plan.
  - Members will be expected to conduct work on at least part of this plan between meetings. It is each portfolio participant's responsibility to liaise with each other to manage their time and project progression. Assistance from the MSAC Chair and/or the Consumer Carer and Engagement Coordinator will be provided as required. Ad hoc meetings will be conducted between individual MSAC members or sub-committees and members of the Leadership Team in regards to portfolio responsibilities. It is the responsibility of Council members to plan and attend these meetings. Assistance from the MSAC Chair and/or the Consumer Carer and Engagement Coordinator in doing this will be provided as required.
- In conjunction with the Chair, present, on a regular basis to the MSL Board and the MSL Leadership Team in relation to the conduct and findings emerging from the portfolio projects conducted by MSAC and its members.

- Provide concise regular updates on MSAC activities and the progress of projects to the MSL CEO and Board (Chair).
- Provide a formal annual report at an appropriate MSL Board meeting and a report of the activity and achievements of MSAC which will be included in the MSL Annual Report (Chair).
- Undertake research commissioned by MSL, designed to gather information on the views and needs of people with MS, their families and carers, and utilise other available data and research related to these needs and views.
- Access broad level financial and operational details such as those contained in the Annual Report which will be provided to MSAC and its members to give context to their plans and portfolio projects.
  - The Council will be kept informed of MSL's strategy and activities so that MSAC can effectively communicate with the wider networks of people with MS, their families and carers.
  - MSL will present each MSAC with a quarterly update at 4 selected meetings during the year. This update will cover items such as service usage, achievements, financial overview, complaint data, and a brief description of the demands on MSL relative to funding and supply. This will be presented by the CEO and/or members of The Leadership Team.

## **Membership and Roles**

Each state/territory chapter of MSAC will comprise at least six and not more than 12 members who will bring to the local chapter diverse perspectives of people with personal experience of MS, and will include a maximum of two positions for family and carers. Employees of MSL are not eligible for membership.

Specific role requirements for MSAC Members, Chairs and Consumer Carer and Engagement Coordinator are contained in Position Descriptions separately defined but to be read in conjunction with this Charter. Previous sections of this Charter are now included in relevant Position Descriptions covering - Confidentiality, Time commitment, Term of Appointment, Resignation & Removal of Members.

MSAC members will be appointed by the MSAC Chair and approved by the MSL Board in its absolute discretion resulting from an expression of interest and invitation process, which includes:

- a) Wide advertisement for expressions of interest,
- b) Expressions of interest from members of existing Branches, Auxiliaries, PwMS groups, and other existing groups of people with MS and their families or carers,

Appointments will be based on two intersecting sets of criteria which will include:

- a) Ensuring that each local MSAC chapter is representative of the broader population of people with MS in that state/territory in relation to age, gender, culture/ethnicity, rural/urban and different levels of disability. This should be gauged by an annual membership audit; and
- b) Candidate competencies as specified in the relevant Position Descriptions.

### **Review of MSAC and this Charter**

The operations of MSAC and this Charter will be reviewed annually by a working party jointly convened by the MSAC Chair, Consumer Carer and Engagement Coordinator, Chairman of the MSL Board and the CEO.