



Consumer and Community  
Involvement Program



WAHTN

Western Australian Health Translation Network

# THE MENOPAUSE TRANSITION IN NON-OFFICE WORK ENVIRONMENTS COMMUNITY CONVERSATION REPORT



Prepared By

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August 2024



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S

02.

Acknowledgements

H

03.

Background

Z

04.

What is the Consumer and Community Involvement Program?

E

05.

What is a Community Conversation?

H

06.

About the Community Conversation

Z

07.

Promotion

O

08.

The Community Conversation Team

O

09.

Research Team

10.

Attendees

11.

Structure and Process

12.

Key Takeaways of the Community Conversation

13.

Agenda

14.

Community Conversation Questions and Responses

17.

Event Summary / What's Next?

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## Acknowledgement of Country

The WAHTN CCIP Program acknowledges the Aboriginal people of the many traditional lands and language groups of Western Australia. We acknowledge the wisdom of Aboriginal Elders both past and present and pay respect to Aboriginal communities of today.

Thank you to the consumers and community members who attended the online Community Conversation. We couldn't have done this without any of you.

We'd also like to acknowledge the team from the University of Western Australia and the Consumer and Community Involvement Program (CCIP Program) support team for their hard work in successfully delivering the Community Conversation. Our heartfelt thanks.

## Acknowledgement of Lived Experience

We acknowledge the importance and expertise of the lived experience voice of health consumers and carers. We recognise their involvement in making a difference in supporting health research and impacting the health and wellbeing of our communities.



# BACKGROUND

The research team actively partnered with the Consumer and Community Involvement Program to facilitate a Community Conversation event to bring together members of the community with lived experience of the menopause transition whilst working in a non-office environment. The event aimed to discuss and understand the challenges of participants, and their coping mechanisms, when experiencing the menopause transition at work. The information obtained during the event will be used to develop further research in this area.

## Why?

Half of the population will experience the menopause transition directly, and the other half through their relationships with partners, friends or colleagues

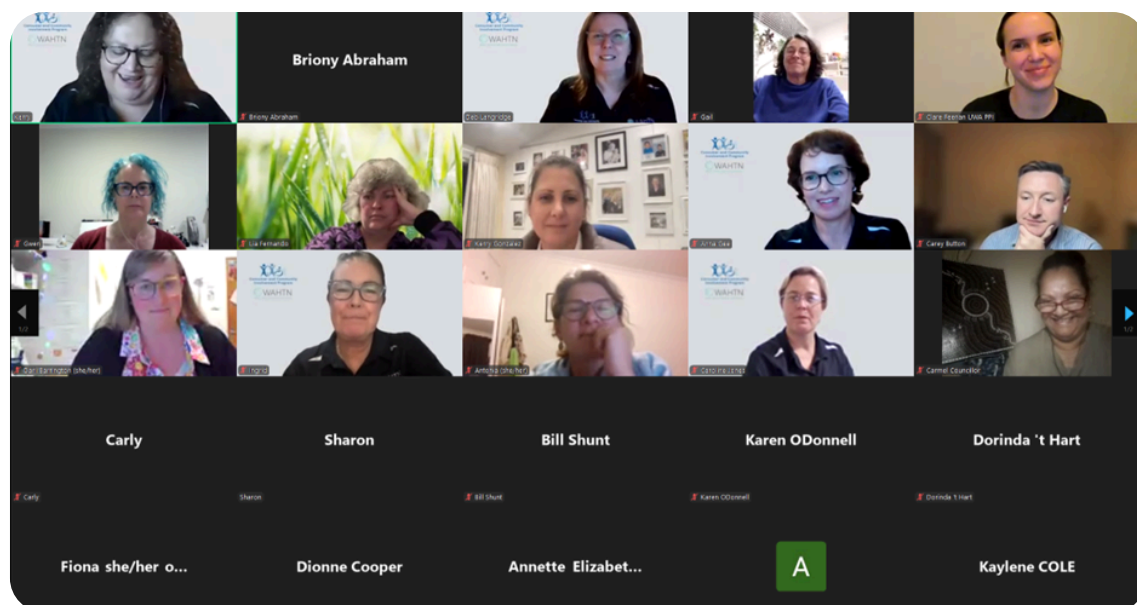
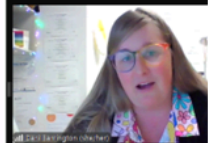
~25% people experience serious symptoms

~80% of people going through the menopause transition are in work

Women retire ~7 years earlier than men (aged 54), and many say this is due to their own health

Most people are unwilling to disclose menopause-related health problems to managers

**Almost everything we know about the menopause transition at work comes from people who work in an office environment!**



# WHAT IS THE CONSUMER AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM?



The Consumer and Community Involvement Program (CCIProgram) supports consumer and community involvement across the Western Australian Health Translation Network (WAHTN) partner organisations.

CCIProgram's **Vision** is to improve lives by ensuring the community's voice is heard and understood in health research

CCIProgram's **Mission** is enabling consumer and community involvement in health research by supporting and connecting community with researchers, partners and policy makers.

In order to achieve CCIProgram's Vision we:

- Are inclusive
- Trust, respect, support and value each other and those we work with
- Work as a team
- Are relevant and sustainable so as to make a difference.

# WHAT IS A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION?

A Community Conversation is an event using an abridged version of the Word Café Method [1] and allows for the facilitation of informal, open conversations around a specific topic of importance. This method allows researchers to informally obtain a range of communal ideas from a group of people with lived experience around a particular topic specified prior to the event [2],[3]. Additionally, a Community Conversation provides an opportunity for attendees to reflect upon their own relevant experiences and contribute in meaningful discussions within a safe and comfortable space.



[1] Brown, J., & Isaacs, D. (2005). *The World Cafe : Shaping our futures through conversations that matter*. Barrett-Koehler

[2] Chieh-Ling Yang, Delphine Labbé, Brodie M. Sakakibara, Janneke Vissers & Marie-Louise Bird (2022) World Café- a community conversation: a Canadian perspective on stroke survivors needs for community integration, *Topics in Stroke Rehabilitation*, 29:5, 392-400.

[3] Carter, E. W., Schutz, M. A., Gajjar, S. A., Maves, E. A., Bumble, J. L., & McMillan, E. D. (2021). Using Community Conversations to Inform Transition Education in Rural Communities. *The Journal of Special Education*, 55(3), 131-142.

# ABOUT THE COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

The Community Conversation was held on Wednesday, 7th August 2024, and included 25 Consumers from Australia and five members of the Consumer and Community Involvement Program. Four researchers from the University of Western Australia and one from Curtin University presented an overview of their project and acted as scribes for the breakout rooms.

Because of the taboo around the world of Menopause, my mum and Nana never spoke about it. We need to make everyone aware.

Awareness is the way to go in regards to Menopause as every female is going to go through this in their lives

I would like to keep being involved in such initiatives in the future



# PROMOTION

The Research Team worked closely with the CCIP Program to recruit members of the Australian community who had lived experience of the menopause transition whilst working in non-office environments. We shared promotional communications across multiple channels.

Flyers and social media posts (X, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn) were posted and circulated around relevant networks, including consumer and/or related health service provider networks and community groups.

The event was originally planned to be face to face, but due to feedback from interested participants, it was changed to an online conversation.



**COMMUNITY CONVERSATION**



**HAVE YOU RECENTLY EXPERIENCED THE MENOPAUSE TRANSITION WHILST WORKING IN A NON-OFFICE ENVIRONMENT?**

We are holding a Community Conversation where your experiences will inform the development of a research program to better understand the menopause transition in non-office workplaces. The research program will also investigate potential policy and practice interventions to improve the lives of Western Australians navigating the menopause transition.

**We seek:** Those experiencing, or who have recently experienced (in the past ten years), the menopause transition whilst working in a non-office environment.

**A \$70 honorarium is offered to attendees on the night and light refreshments will be provided.**

**Register your interest**

**WHEN:** Wednesday 7th August 2024  
**TIME:** 6-8pm  
**WHERE:** ~~The Rice, Maylands~~

**ONLINE!**



<https://bit.ly/45RV4DT>





# THE COMMUNITY CONVERSATION TEAM

## **Deb Langridge - Head, CCIProgram**

Lead Facilitator



Deb has worked in the public health and prevention space at all levels of government – Federal, State and Local – and not for profit sectors to contribute to the health and well-being of communities. She has worked to capture the voices of all parts of community including access and inclusion, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, children and young people, mental health, health and community services. Deb has been the Chair of Advisory Groups in both NSW and WA. She has always worked connecting community, government, and community with a well-being focus, and was a representative on WA Sustainable Health Review with this in mind.

Deb's role leading the Consumer and Community Involvement Program as a platform of the Western Australia Health Translation Network is to connect researchers in WA Universities, Medical Research Institutes, Government, and Health Service Providers with people with lived experience to support and encourage best practice research. Deb is passionate about ensuring research can impact policy, practice and wellbeing of communities and enjoys bringing people together to make a difference.

## **Kerry Mace, Ingrid Laing & Caroline Jones - CCIProgram**

Room Facilitators



Thankyou to the CCIProgram facilitators for their assistance in facilitating the conversation with the attending community members.



# THE RESEARCH TEAM



Government of **Western Australia**  
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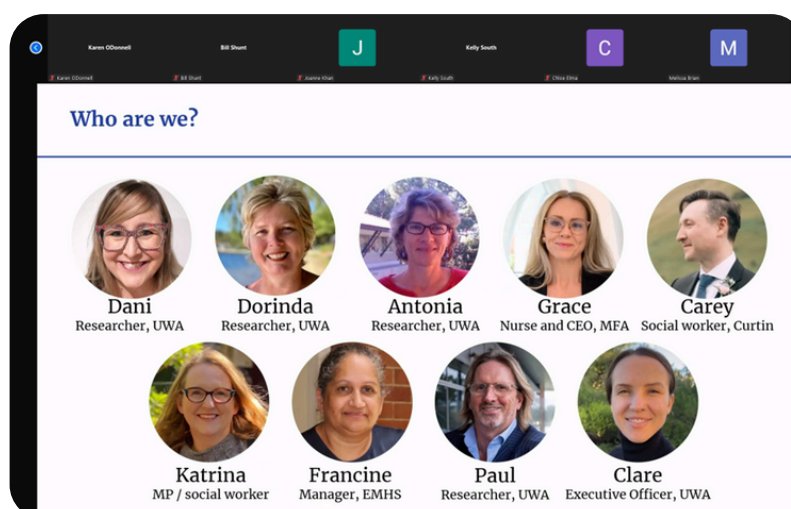


**Dr Dani Barrington - Lead Researcher**  
**Senior Lecturer in Global Health**  
**The University of Western Australia**

Dr Dani Barrington specialises in understanding and improving experiences of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), with a particular focus on menstrual health, toileting and incontinence. She is a Senior Lecturer in Global Health at The University of Western Australia, an Honorary Fellow at The University of Queensland and a Guest Lecturer at University of Leeds.

## Thankyou to the other research team members:

Dr Dorinda 't Hart, Clare Feenan, Dr Antonia Hendrick and Carey Button for their assistance in scribing the conversation with the attending community members, and Francine Eades, Dr Katrina Stratton, Dr Paul Maginn and Grace Molloy for their assistance in designing the event.



# ATTENDEES

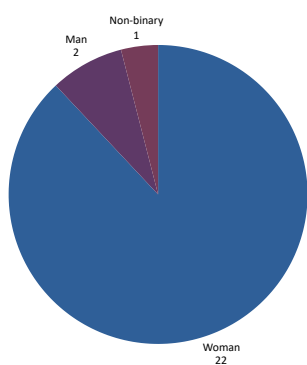
25 community members with experience in a variety of non-office work environments (including seamstressing, data analysis, healthcare, Indigenous Lived Experience Nyoongar Advocacy, teaching, beauty therapy, operations management, Border Force, cleaning, library management, plumbing and gasfitting, sales, heavy machinery operation, stage performing). Four attendees identified as Aboriginal and four as Torres Strait Islander.

5 CCIP program team members

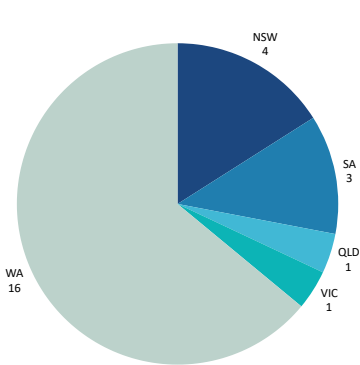
5 research team members

## ATTENDEE DEMOGRAPHICS

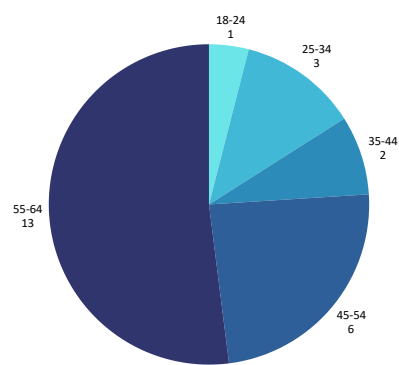
### GENDER IDENTITY



### LOCATION

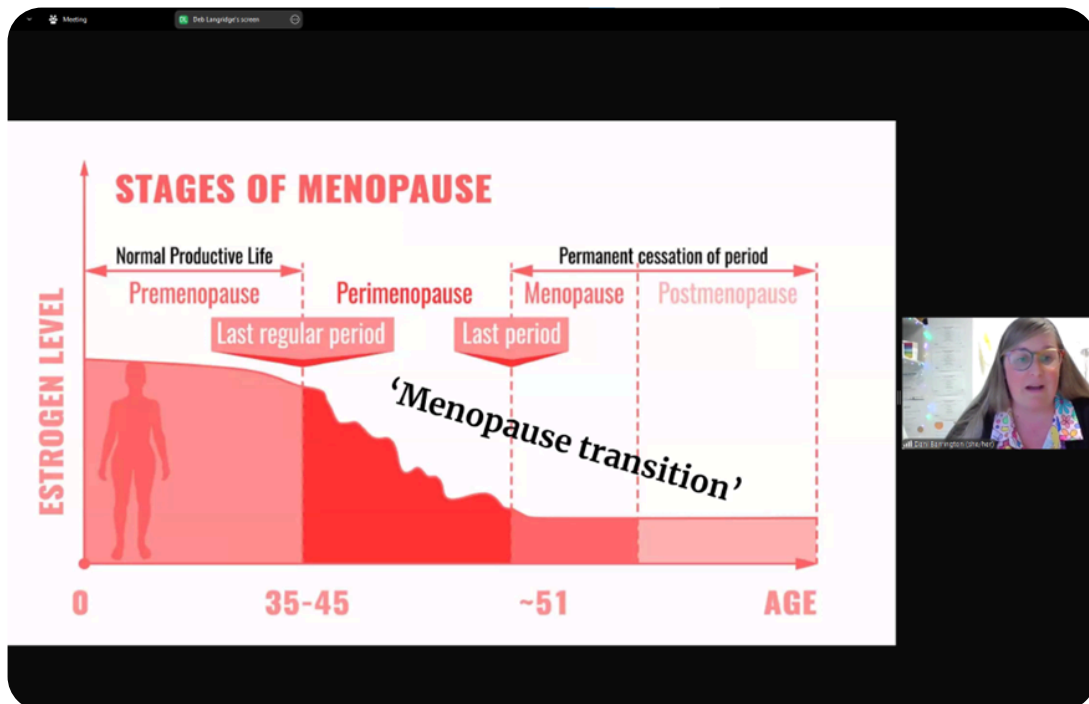


### AGE



# STRUCTURE AND PROCESS

Attendees joined the Community Conversation online, via Zoom. They were introduced to the research team and the Consumer and Community Involvement Program (CCIPProgram) before being allocated to one of 3 breakout rooms.



Each breakout room had a room facilitator from the CCIPProgram to assist attendees and guide them through the questions and discussions. Each room also had a scribe from the research team to record the feedback provided by the attendees.

Facilitators presented 3 questions to the Consumers in each room:

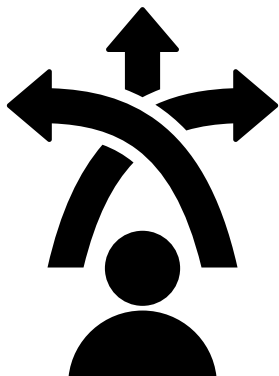
- What are/were the most bothersome aspects of the menopause transition when you are/were at work?
- Is/was there anything that improves/improved your experience of the menopause transition when you are/were at work?
- How do you think we should be conducting research on this topic?

Each question was allocated 20 minutes for discussion. The comments, feedback and suggestions were all captured by the scribes and are presented in the following pages of this report.

# KEY TAKEAWAYS OF THE COMMUNITY CONVERSATION



- People experiencing symptoms of the menopause transition in non-office workplaces often struggle to manage their symptoms and work effectively due to their specific tasks and physical environments
- This is exacerbated by unsupportive colleagues, particularly in male-dominated workplaces



- Flexibility is the thing participants consider most important to improving their experience of the menopause transition in non-office workplaces
- Participants believe that reducing the taboo surrounding the menopause transition, and educating everybody on the menopause transition, will further improve experiences



- Individuals may be reluctant to participate in research where their involvement may be visible to others
- Some research participants will prefer to share their experiences through open-ended, verbal discussions, whilst others will prefer filling in pre-defined online questionnaires
- Research on this topic will need to offer a variety of ways for individuals to be recruited and participate

**The Menopause Transition  
Community Conversation  
Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> August 2024 – 6pm to 8pm  
ONLINE via Zoom**

**Agenda**

5.50pm	Join via Zoom link	All
6.00pm	<b>Welcome</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledgement of Country and Acknowledgement of Lived Experience</li> <li>• Welcome to the Community Conversation</li> <li>• Introductions</li> </ul>	Deb Langridge
6.10pm	Presentation & questions	Dr Dani Barrington
6.20pm	Process of the evening & breakout rooms (questions)	Deb
6.25pm	<b>Question 1</b> What are the most bothersome aspects of the menopause transition when you're at work? <b>(20 mins)</b>	All
6.45pm	<b>Question 2</b> Is there anything that improves your experience of the menopause transition when you're at work? <b>(20 mins)</b>	All
7.05pm	<b>Question 3</b> How do you think we should be conducting research on this topic? <b>(20 mins)</b>	All
7.25pm	Room facilitator feedback	Deb and CCI Coordinators
7.45pm	Next steps and questions	Deb & Dani
7.55pm	Evaluation and honorarium information	Deb
5.00pm	Thanks and close	Deb

# COMMUNITY CONVERSATION QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

## ATTENDEE INSIGHTS

The following pages contain the responses and thoughts shared by attendees at the Community Conversation.

## QUESTION 1

### WHAT ARE/WERE THE MOST BOTHERSOME ASPECTS OF THE MENOPAUSE TRANSITION WHEN YOU ARE/WERE AT WORK?

#### PROMPTS:

- **Do you have physical symptoms that impact your work?**
- **Do you believe you are treated differently to other employees because you are going through the menopause transition?**
- **Do you worry about your ability to do your job because of your (peri)menopause symptoms? And if so, how and in what ways?**

Participants often struggle due to their specific tasks and physical environments.

- Hot flushes can be exacerbated by the nature of the work (e.g., outside, under lights) and the dress code (e.g., corporate, PPE);
- Insomnia and tiredness are a particular issue for shift work, and are possibly a safety concern (e.g., when working with chemicals);
- It can be difficult to manage heavy and/or irregular menstrual bleeding in some environments, particularly in some uniforms and where bathroom facilities may not be accessible/appropriate;
- For those with muscle or bone pain, non-office work can be difficult and can mean needing to change some aspects of jobs;
- Mental health issues and brain fog are difficult, although it isn't clear how they are/may be exacerbated by the non-office work environment.

There is a concern from participants that they will be perceived as less able to do their job, and possibly discriminated against because of this.

- Many people choose not to voice their struggles;
- In male-dominated workplaces particularly, individuals with symptoms are often discriminated against or ridiculed by male colleagues;
- Sometimes, older women who have already experienced the menopause, perhaps with less severe symptoms, belittle the experiences of those struggling at work.

Due to the nature of non-office work, some participants have had to leave their job, change roles within their company (e.g., to enable desk-based tasks or working from home), or alter certain aspects of their roles (e.g., not doing heavy lifting tasks).

# QUESTION 2

**IS/WAS THERE ANYTHING THAT IMPROVES/IMPROVED YOUR EXPERIENCE OF THE MENOPAUSE TRANSITION WHEN YOU ARE/WERE AT WORK?**

## **PROMPTS:**

- **Are there particular colleagues or bosses that have been supportive? How so?**
- **If there is flexibility in your job, how do you use it to improve your experience of the menopause transition?**
- **Have there been any particular physical changes to your workspace that have improved your experience?**
- **If no to all these, then what would improve your experience in your workplace?**

By far, flexibility was the thing participants considered most important to improving their experience of the menopause transition in non-office workplaces.

- This included being able to use a miniature fan in their immediate environment, and/or move somewhere cooler (e.g., outside, cool room) as needed;
- For both temperature management and mental health, many appreciated having a dedicated space where they could have a brief rest from the job;
- Those who have been able to shift to working from home, at least part of the time, have found that this assists them being able to do their job comfortably;
- Regardless of the work environment, participants believed that flexibility with time management (e.g., start/finish hours, scheduling own tasks) was appreciated and helped them do their job more effectively;
- Some participants suggested that incorporating wellness into workplaces would be helpful (e.g., exercise programs or reduced gym membership fees, mindfulness, more breaks);
- Only two participants noted that they would appreciate more leave days to manage their symptoms.

Some participants have supportive colleagues who are open to discussing the menopause transition, particularly women (of all ages) and younger men.



# QUESTION 3

## HOW DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD BE CONDUCTING RESEARCH ON THIS TOPIC?

### PROMPTS:

- **Where do you think the knowledge gaps are in how workplaces could better support people going through the menopause transition?**
- **How do you think we should engage people if we want to hear their lived experiences**
- **Do you have ideas of how things could be improved, but which need more study to understand whether they work?**
- **What do you wish you had known more about regarding the menopause transition, particularly in the workplace, before you experienced it?**

Participants resoundingly believe there are two things that will improve their experiences: dismantling the menopause taboo and educating everybody.

- Participants believe that if everyone (including those who will never experience the menopause transition) is educated on the impacts the menopause transition has on lives, it will reduce the taboo surrounding the topic and improve experiences broadly;
- Some participants highlighted that this education needs to include a more informed understanding of gender (i.e., experiences of trans-, gender non-binary and intersex persons);
- Participants also believe that GPs need further education on the topic.

Participants recommended many avenues for further research. In addition to dismantling the taboo surrounding menopause and educating individuals in a variety of settings (e.g., at school, in public, in workplaces), they suggested:

- Investigating the impact of flexibility in non-office workplaces, and how often individuals experiencing the menopause transition in such workplaces change tasks or roles, or leave their job entirely;
- How the patriarchy impacts on experiences of the menopause transition;
- How people experience the menopause transition differently;
- Ways in which symptoms can be reduced or more effectively managed.

Participants suggested a broad range of options for recruiting and engaging individuals.

- Some suggested recruitment in very public spaces (e.g., shopping centres) whilst others very private spaces (e.g., online anonymously);
- One participant suggested this research should be conducted in partnership with large organisations who could incentivise their employees to take part.

Some participants suggested the research use very qualitative methods (e.g., focus group discussions) whilst others more quantitative methods (e.g., questionnaires).

This highlights the need for a range of recruitment and data collection approaches to understand and improve experiences of the menopause transition in non-office workplaces.

# EVENT SUMMARY



Evaluation and feedback from attendees were collected through the CCIP Program following the Community Conversation. The consensus from all who attended was that the Community Conversation was interesting and informative, covering areas they wanted to speak about. Overall, the event was extremely successful and will allow the research team to design a study to better understand how managers of Australian non-office workplaces can better support their employees.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

The information shared by the Community Conversation participants on their lived experiences has already been shared as both verbal and written evidence with the Federal Senate Inquiry into Issues Related to Menopause and Perimenopause. This will inform the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs' report and recommendations to the Parliament on how Australia can better support individuals experiencing the menopause transition. The Committee's report will be available from September 2024:

[www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Community\\_Affairs/Menopause](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Community_Affairs/Menopause)

The research team will also use the information from the Community Conversation to write a publicly available editorial arguing for the allocation of research funds to understanding and improving the menopause transition in non-office workplaces, and developing a grant proposal to conduct more research on the topic.

# The Menopause Transition – Community Conversation

## 7 August 2024 – 6 to 8pm Online via Zoom

### Evaluation Summary

12 Forms completed / 25 attendees

Please tick the responses which best match your view:

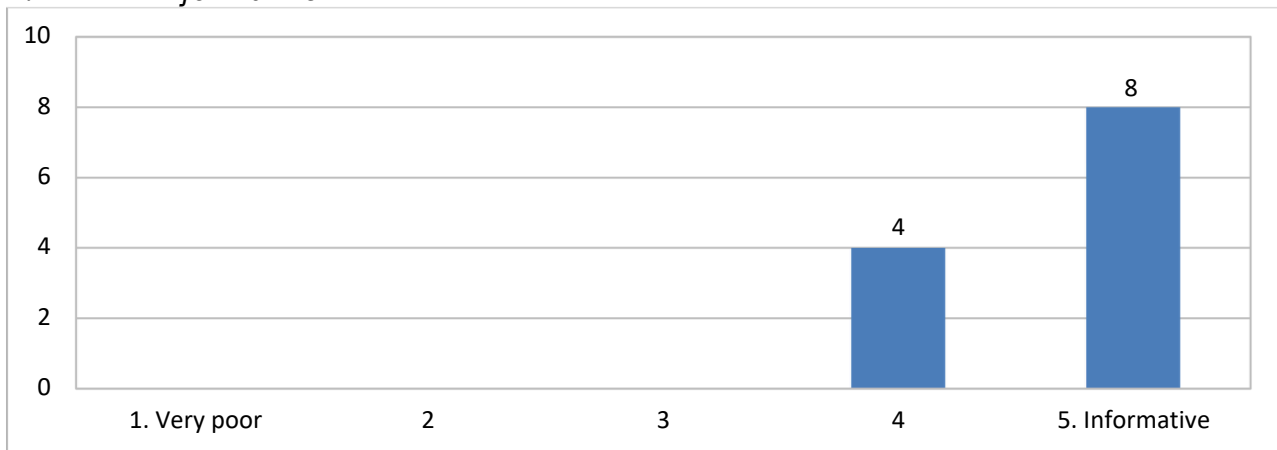
1. The Community Conversation was:

**NEGATIVE**

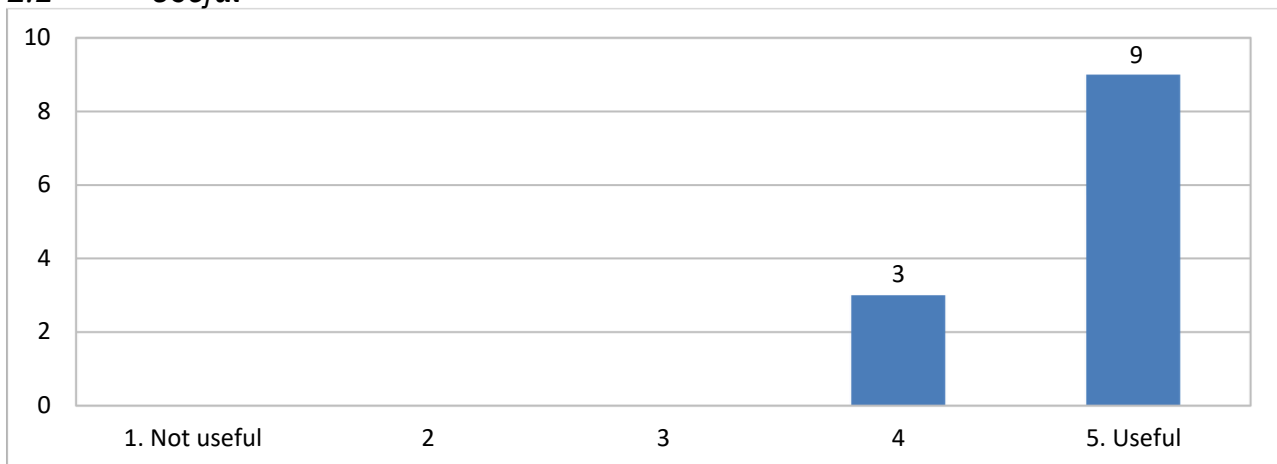


**POSITIVE**

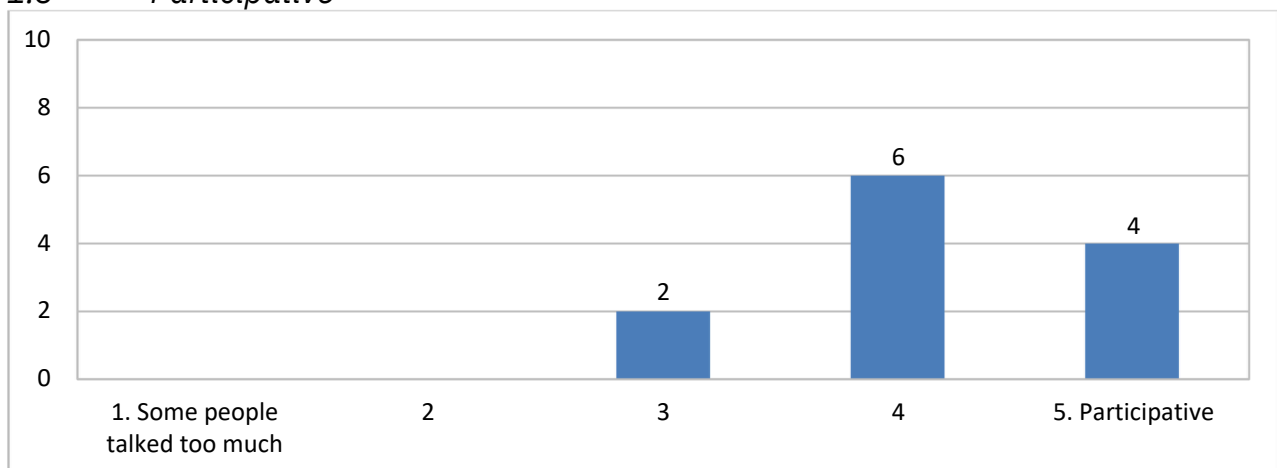
1.1 *Informative*



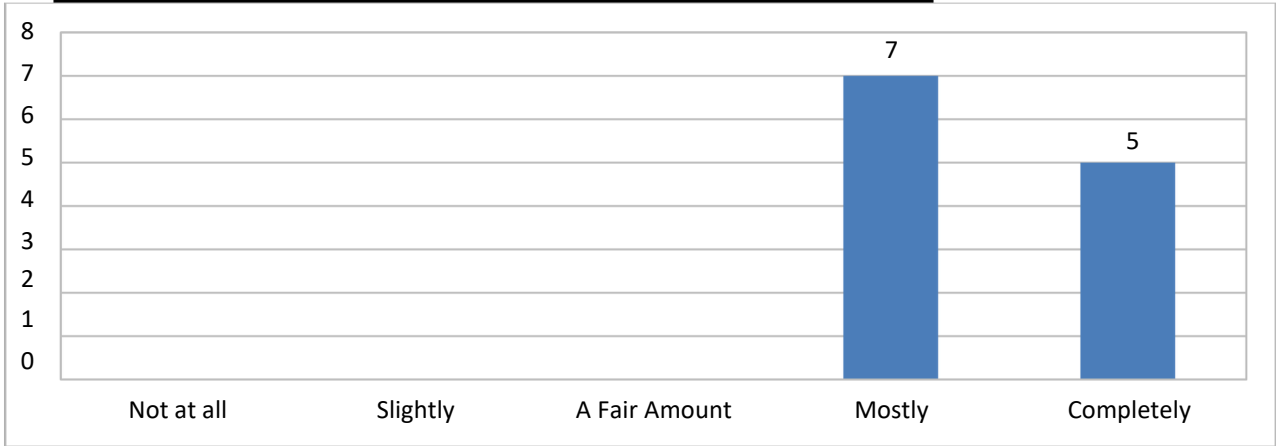
1.2 *Useful*



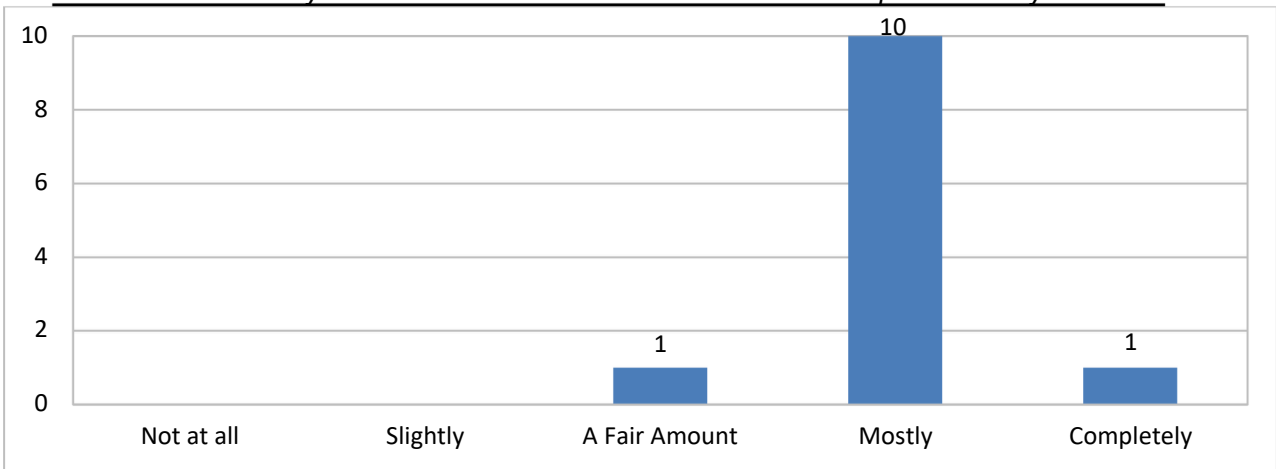
1.3 *Participative*



2. Did the community conversation meet your expectations?

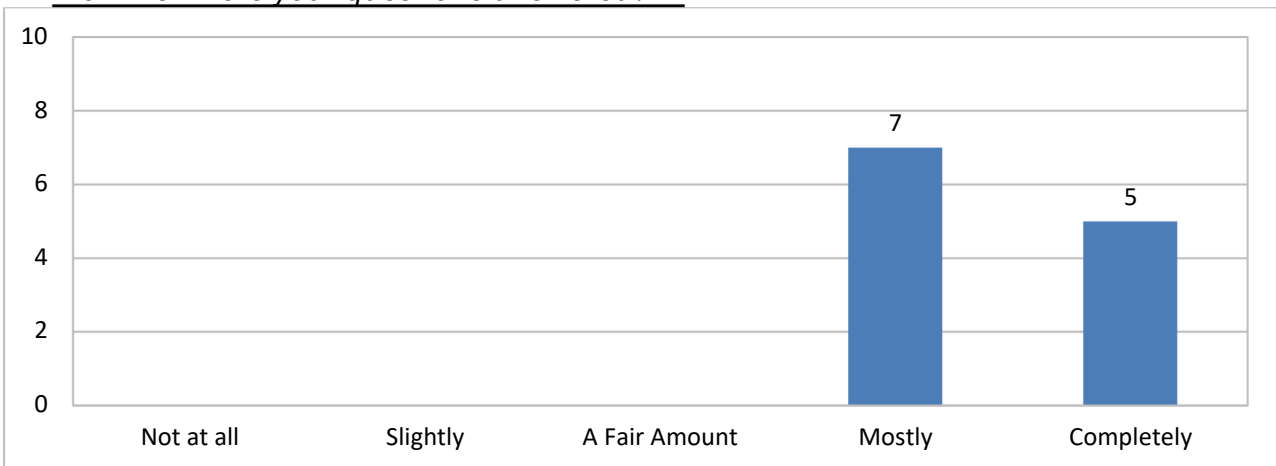


3. Did the community conversation cover areas that were important to you?

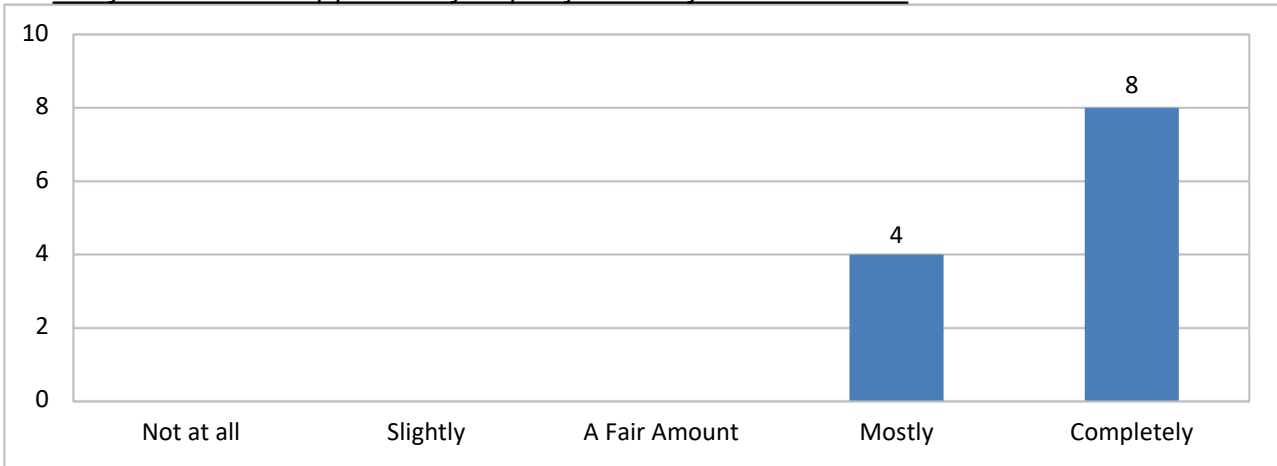


If "not at all" please specify what additional information could have been included:

4. How well were your questions answered?



5. Did you have the opportunity to put forward your ideas?



6. Is there anything else you would like to add?

- Awareness is the way to go in regards to Menopause as every female is going to go through this in their lives.
- Would have preferred face to face meeting
- I would like to keep being involved in such initiatives in the future

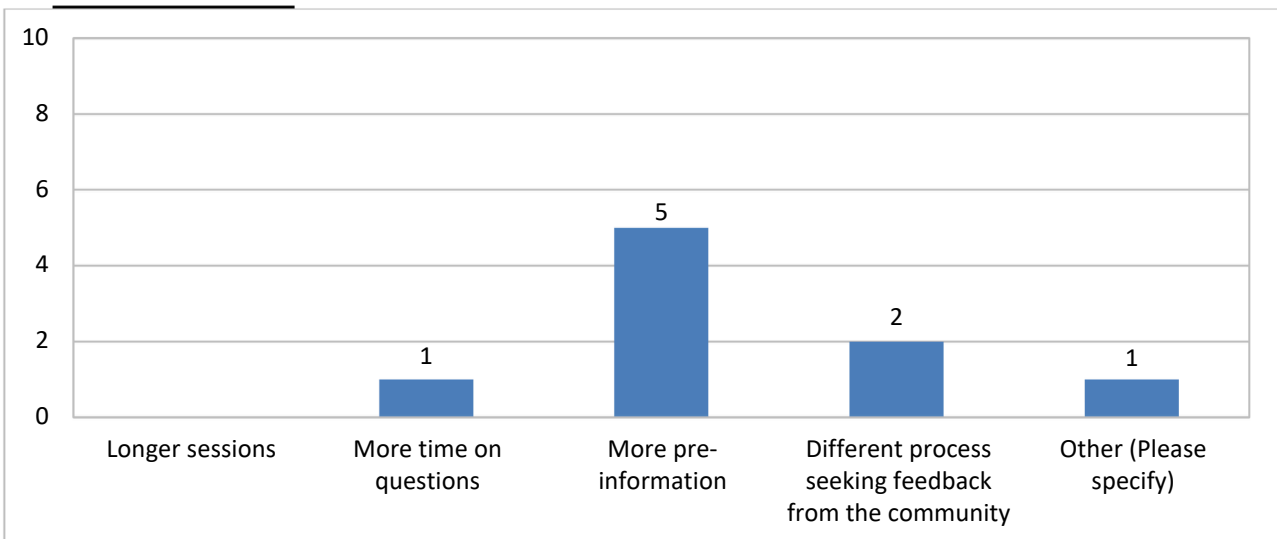
7. The best thing about the community conversation was:

- A broad spectrum of people involved
- Engaging with other females who are going through Menopausal symptoms and finding that not everyone has the same.
- Hearing what others had to say
- The interaction with other women in the same situation

8. The worst thing about the community conversation was:

- Using Zoom/being online – in-person would have been better
- I had sound issues (technical issues)

9. Do you have any suggestions about how we might improve future Community Conversations?



Other (Please specify):

- Surveys would be great to see if we are able to understand the difference between Menopausal symptoms.
- In person meetings please

Quotes:

- “Because of the taboo around the world of Menopause, my mum and Nana never spoke about it. We need to make everyone aware.” “Perimenopause Specialists GPs and
- Gynaecologists we could consult”

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# WANT TO KNOW MORE?

**PHONE:** (08) 6151 1071

**E-MAIL:** ADMIN@CCIPROGRAM.ORG

**WEBSITE:** WWW.CCIPROGRAM.ORG

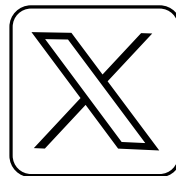
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