



Wednesday 28 March, 2012

**Name:** Meghan Lodwick  
**Phone:** 03 9479 5353  
**Mob:** 0418 495 941  
**Email:** [m.lodwick@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:m.lodwick@latrobe.edu.au)  
**Web:** [www.latrobe.edu.au/news](http://www.latrobe.edu.au/news)  
**Twitter:** @latrobenews

## **Dr Ken Harvey receives CHOICE award**

**La Trobe University Public Health expert Dr Ken Harvey has been awarded the CHOICE (The Australian Consumers Association) Consumer Champion for 2012.**

Dr Harvey has focused on medicinal drug policy throughout his career. His advocacy for equitable and affordable access to necessary medicines, ethical promotion, rational use and regulatory reform reflect his deep commitment to consumer rights.

Dr Harvey has served as a consumer advocate on many government committees and firmly believes in the partnership concept enshrined in Australian Medicines Policy. 'All stakeholders: industry, health professionals, consumers and government have different agendas and priorities' says Dr. Harvey. 'It's important to respect and listen to different points of view while still strongly advocating for consumers.'

Consumer advocacy has risks; Dr Harvey has been subjected to SLAPP writs (strategic litigation against public participation) when he refused to withdraw a complaint against a complementary medicine weight loss product (SensaSlim). While these writs were ultimately thrown out of court they do highlight the need for Federal legislation to protect whistle-blowers. They also showed that many people were prepared to help; a legal fighting fund covered all Dr Harvey's legal costs.

'It is an honour to receive recognition for consumer advocacy' says Dr Harvey. 'It's also a tribute to the many friends, colleagues and organisations that have assisted and supported me over many years'

Dr Harvey has previously been awarded life membership of CHOICE for services to the consumer movement and is a member of their Policy Advisory Group. He is Chair of the Governing Council of Health Action International Asia Pacific, an international health advocacy organisation set up by Consumers International. He is a member of the scientific program committee of a forthcoming Asia Pacific Conference on National Medicines Policies.

'I'll continue to pursue consumer rights' he says, 'I'm also focusing on recruiting and training the next generation of health activists. Consumer rights are continually under threat from those who believe in unrestrained capitalism, big business and small government. We need more young people to work with consumer organisations and universities have an important role to play.'

CHOICE (the people's watchdog) is the public face of the Australian Consumers' Association (ACA). CHOICE is a completely self-funded body that provides consumers with purchasing advice as a result of independent product testing and, where shonky products require legislative redress, political advocacy.

**ENDS**

**For more information or to arrange an interview please contact:**

**Meghan Lodwick**  
La Trobe University Communications Officer  
**T:** 03 9479 5353 **M:** 0418 495 941 **E:** [M.Lodwick@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:M.Lodwick@latrobe.edu.au)