

Meetings too short: Thomson

IT was crazy to have Otago-Southland disability support advisory committee members from Waitaki to Invercargill getting together for a monthly meeting which lasted only about an hour, Otago District Health Board chairman Richard Thomson said.

Mr Thomson, who is not a member of the committee, said debate was needed about the frequency of the meetings.

The Otago-Southland committee has been meeting monthly, alternately in Dunedin and Invercargill, with video- conferencing offered to members in the city not hosting that month's meeting.

Committee member Helen Algar said the frequency of meetings was only one thing that needed to be discussed. The committee also placed too much emphasis on disability issues and not enough on aged care, she said.

Some issues discussed at the community and public health advisory committee (CPHAC), the other committee with Otago-Southland membership, could also valuably be dealt with by the disability support committee.

Fellow committee member Louise Carr agreed that matters related to the aged-care strategy needed to be brought before the committee.

Chief executive Brian Rousseau said it was unrealistic to expect the two committees would have similar-sized agendas.

The disability committee was dealing with matters relating to about 10% of what the board as a funding provider did, compared with 90% for CPHAC.

Dr Malcolm Macpherson said members of the disability advisory committee had discussed whether what was on the agenda reflected what was going on in the sector, and that needed to be tested by members reporting back.

Member Peter Barron said the Southland view, which might be held with considerable passion and belief, was that the Southland model of meeting had worked well and, in the spirit of regional co-operation, looking at that might be fraught.

Mrs Algar said assumptions about that could not be made because that discussion had not taken place.

Mr Thomson said it was a relatively dangerous discussion for one board to be having, and discussions should be held around the disability support advisory committee meeting table.

Before the move to joint Otago and Southland committees following the local government elections last year, the Otago board combined the meetings of the two advisory committees.

This practice attracted some criticism from some disability support advisory committee members, who were concerned that disability issues were sidelined and that too much attention was paid to matters related to over 65-year-olds.

Credit:Otago Daily Times