



NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH CONSUMER & CARER FORUM

NMHCCF submission to the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care Consultation on National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards

October 2010

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the new National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards.

The National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum (NMHCCF) is the combined national voice for consumers and carers participating in the development of mental health policy and sector development in Australia.

The NMHCCF welcomes the new standards and notes that the following standards will be particularly applicable in mental health care settings:

- ***Partnering for Consumer Engagement***, which creates a consumer-centred health system by including consumers in the design and delivery of quality health care;
- ***Recognising and Responding to Clinical Deterioration in Acute Health Care***, which describes the systems required by health services responding to patients when their clinical condition deteriorates.

However, it will be extremely important that there is some sort of implementation strategy developed to drive the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards and ensure that they do not just remain on a shelf somewhere. It has been the experience of consumers and carers in the mental health sector that the very good National Mental Health Standards, which were first introduced in 1996, have not been well implemented. While these standards have recently been revised and updated, mental health consumers and carers are still asking if they will be implemented effectively.

The NMHCCF would also like to advise that while the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards includes carers in the definition of health consumers, this will be problematic in the mental health sector. It is the experience of mental health consumers and carers that as well as the usual difficulties of ensuring that clinicians include consumers in the design and delivery of their health care, it is very often equally as problematic for carers to be considered as key stakeholders in care.

Despite a number of legislative efforts and local policy initiatives, mental health services still struggle with the inclusion of carers as users of services. Because of consumer privacy considerations carers are also often wrongly judged not to be entitled to be included in information provision or consultation on care plans. The NMHCCF issues paper on privacy and confidentiality, commissioned in 2009, provides a detailed discussion of these issues and is available at the link below:

<http://www.nmhccf.org.au/documents/FINAL%20NMHCCF%20PC%20%20issues%20paper%202009.pdf>.

Therefore, because it is so important for clinicians in mental health to be reminded of the need to include consumers and carers, the NMHCCF proposes that the term 'consumers and carers' be explicitly stated in the Standards.

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