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on Safety and Quality
in Health CareSYDNEY SOUTH WEST
AREA HEALTH SERVICE
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Professor C Baggoley
Chief Executive
Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care
GPO Box 5480
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Professor Baggoley

Re: Call for written submissions on a draft National Patient Charter of Rights

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft National Patient Charter of Rights.

I have referred this matter to the Sydney South West Area Health Service (SSWAHS) Director, Clinical Governance for response and I advise the following.

Comment has also been sought from the SSWAHS Community Participation.

The Director acknowledges the Commission's work in progressing consistency between national and state levels with respect to this matter.

Patient Charters aim to improve the quality of health service delivery to patients and the draft Charter sets out comprehensively a number of patients' rights and standards of service patients can expect to receive in areas addressing, among others, waiting times; information about services and treatment; and privacy and dignity of the patient.

The Director has some preliminary comments, which I propose addressing in the following numbered format:

(1)- Clarification of terminology:

Presumably, a lexicon will accompany the patient charter document in clarifying the meaning of some critical terms within the patient charter for both patients and service providers. Misunderstanding may arise with respect to the meaning of 'patient right' (a right that a patient will receive all the time) *versus* 'patient expectation' (standards of service which an Area Health Service for example is aiming to achieve) *versus* 'patient entitlement' (the right due to an individual or guarantee of access to benefits?)

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(2)- Patient Responsibilities:

It is noted that the patient charter makes little reference to patient responsibilities? It would be envisaged that a patient charter would be predicated upon an ongoing collaborative endeavour between patients and service provider. In other words, the patient viewed as an active agent in managing his/ her health care and illness.

(3)- Resource limitation aspects:

Would the Commission consider giving an introductory foreword to the difficulties that may be encountered from time to time in the delivery of health care. For example, with respect to when resources may be stretched or scarce or the when the capacity of the health service may be unable to meet demand at a particular time?

There may be other instances where there may be conflicts between what the patient expects and what is clinically possible?

I trust these comments provide some assistance in the development in this document.

If you wish to raise any additional related matters, you call Mr Graeme Slade, SSWAHS Senior Complaints Officer on 9828-5958.

Yours sincerely



Mike Wallace
Chief Executive

Date: 11/3/08