

THE NATIONAL PATIENT CHARTER OF RIGHTS **Consultation Paper dated 22 January 2008**

Australian Greek Welfare Society (AGWS) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Consultation Paper on National Patient Charter of Rights.

AGWS is a statewide ethno-specific welfare organization which caters to the needs of the Greek community in Victoria. The community services unit programs include: Generalist casework services, Men's Counselling Service, Aged care programs for frail and non frail elderly and people with disabilities, injured workers program, Greek Cardiac program and professional training and consultation.

Aged & Disability Unit provides services to the Greek community responding to the needs of an ageing population. The services include: planned activity groups, in home respite services, volunteer programs and carer's programs with programs.

AGWS has extensive contact with many community services in the health and welfare sectors for over 35 years. The Greek community, like many ethnic communities experiences barriers to accessing services mainly due to the language and cultural needs of this community.

To secure a safe, effective and more responsive care for patients that are socially and culturally appropriate for CALD communities, the following strategies are recommended.

1. All patients must be informed of the processes of admission such as what happens when you are admitted to an acute hospital as well as post acute. This information must be communicated with a qualified interpreter or a bi-lingual worker.
2. Consent documentation for treatment in a hospital must be interpreted adequately so the patient knows their rights and is able to make an informed decision in their respective treatment plan.
3. Effective communication with ethnic communities is imperative if a hospital is to properly engage their respective patients by improving service delivery/change practices.
4. Cross Cultural Awareness Training can assist services to improve their work with ethnic communities. Staff Development Programs should incorporate the cultural differences of CALD communities and to develop better practice by acknowledging these differences. This training can be incorporated into the hospitals Staff Development Program for new staff and existing staff.
5. Written information should be translated in the plainest way to enable the reader to understand the services/programs offered.
6. We cannot assume that a Greek speaking person is linguistic in their respective language and therefore the use of electronic media would be a more cost-effective way of information dissemination.

The Greek speaking community particularly the first generation, are not aware of how to adequately access the public health system and its services, this is exacerbated by the lack of not understanding the processes when admitted into hospital. Treatment and care is compromised which can possibly lead to the wrong decisions and choices about their care.

All patients are entitled to making informed decisions about their treatment and care. Family/Carers are equally as compromised when they too lack an understanding of processes within the public health system.