



Australian Commission  
**06 JUN 2008**  
on Safety and Quality  
in Health Care

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- Temora
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- Urana
- Wagga Wagga
- Weethalle
- West Wyalong
- Yass
- Young

27 May, 2008

Dr Nicola Dunbar  
Australian Commission on Safety & Quality in Healthcare  
GPO Box 5480  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Dr Dunbar,

I refer to your correspondence of January 2008 in which you forwarded the draft National Patient Charter of Rights to the Greater Southern Area Health Service (GSAHS) for comment and review.

Firstly, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this document.

Overall, I believe the charter of rights clearly describes what a patient is entitled to and what they can expect from the health system.

In response to your consultation questions, I provide the following information:

**Section 1: National Patient Charter of Rights and National Patient Charter Principles**

1. **Whether the existence of both the Charter and Principles is useful**  
Both the charter and principles are very useful. The detailed explanation avoids confusion and makes clear comments regarding expectations of the Health Service.
2. **Suitability of the Charter and Principles for use by patients and providers**  
This information is undoubtedly useful for both providers and patients. Distribution resources and clear guidelines will need to accompany the distribution of the charter and principles in order to make it effective. Without providing some level of consultation/discussion with front line providers of health care, the charter and principles risks going unnoticed.
3. **Whether the language used in the Charter and Principles is appropriate**  
Yes the language is appropriate and understandable.

- 4. Preferred options (including structure, style and presentation) for articulating patient rights and entitlements for patients and providers**  
The current style, structure and presentation of the document is appropriate.

### **Section 2: Rights included in the Charter**

- 1. Whether the rights included in the Charter are sufficient to cover the range of patient and human rights**  
In the opinion of the Health Service the rights included appear appropriate, however community/patient consultation would also be beneficial to ascertain if the rights included are appropriate.
- 2. The extent to which the rights represent patient concerns when receiving health care**  
All rights included in the charter represent patient concerns as communicated to the Health Service by its consumers.

### **Section 3: Points included in the Principles**

- 1. Whether the explanations included in the Principles assist in understanding the rights and responsibilities of patients and providers**  
The information in the principles is descriptive and effective in explaining the rights and responsibilities of patients and providers.
- 2. Whether there are additional points that should be included in the Principles to adequately explain the meaning and application of the rights**  
It is my opinion that the information currently provided is sufficient.

### **Section 4: Rights and Responsibilities**

- 1. Whether the balance between the roles, rights and responsibilities of patients and providers is appropriate in the Principles**  
There is a larger emphasis on the responsibility of providers. Patient's behaviour and appropriate ways to behave could be included. This would also be inline with NSW Health Policy Directive relating to Zero Tolerance against Violence in the Workplace.
- 2. Whether the Charter could have more of an emphasis on patient responsibilities as well as rights**  
I believe it would be beneficial to include more information/emphasis on patient responsibilities.

3. **Whether there are other rights, roles and responsibilities that impact on patients and providers that should be included in either the Charter or the Principles**

The information currently included is sufficient (with the exception of recommendations for more information regarding patient responsibilities). Including too much information will result in the document not being user friendly.

**Section 5: Possible uses of the charter**

1. **The potential role for the Charter and Principles in standard setting, accreditation, education & training**

Depending on the implementation/distribution of the charter and principles, this could easily form the foundations for national education, training and education. Each Area Health Service would need to ensure that these rights and principles align with their Area Strategic Plan.

2. **The potential for the Charter and Principles to be used to inform, develop or review public hospital charters**

As this is a National Charter, it would seem appropriate that the principles in this are used to develop and review public hospital charters.

3. **The potential for the Charter and Principles to inform the review of private hospital charters**

As stated above, this is a National Charter and it would seem appropriate that it be used to review and develop private and public hospital charters.

4. **The use of the Charter and Principles to support any requirements included in the next round of discussions with the Australian Health Care Agreements**

It would seem appropriate for this to occur.

**Section 6: How the charter applies in different sectors and settings**

1. **Whether more detail is needed to make the Charter and Principles applicable in practice**

Appropriate education and training should accompany the distribution of this. This should include methods for applying the principles in practice.

2. **Whether the Charter and Principles will be able to be adapted to meeting the needs of specific health care settings or patient or community groups**

The rights and principles outlined in the charter are important and therefore need to be adapted to meet the needs of specific health care settings.

I trust the above provides you with the necessary information on the draft charter. I would like to comment further on the importance of the implementation phase of the charter and encourage the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Healthcare to consider providing education and training on the charter to ensure the principles are applied in everyday practice.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to comment. If you would like to discuss this matter further, please contact Ms Jessica Ryder, Complaints Manager, Greater Southern Area Health Service on 02 6124 9821.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H Gray', written over a faint horizontal line.

Ms Heather Gray  
**Chief Executive**  
**Greater Southern Area Health Service**

GSAHS Ref: Q08/404