

Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council

Submission

To

Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care

On

Draft National Patient Charter of Rights

Introduction: The Victorian Mental Illness awareness Council (VMIAC) is the peak organisation in Victoria for people who have experience with mental illness or emotional problems.

The role of the VMIAC includes providing individual, group and systemic advocacy and/or support for people with a mental illness. We also provide education on mental illness from the consumer perspective to clinical and non-clinical staff, consumers, carers and the general community.

In carrying out our individual advocacy role we visit most inpatient psychiatric units and many community mental health centers on a monthly basis.

Issues 1: While a patient charter currently exists, our experience indicates that voluntary patients (patients not subjected to the Mental Health Act) receive no information about their rights. While concern has been expressed at a local hospital level the view seems to be that if you are a voluntary patient there is no requirement to provide the patient with information about their rights.

Recommendation: That as part of the patient rights statement, under the heading **Issue 1** **Respect** .to add, ..that is respectful of culture etc, to add **diagnosis**.

Rationale: Regular feedback indicates that consumers with a mental illness often experience clinician stigma.

Issue 2 Under the heading of **Information** it should read: I am entitled to be informed about my **rights**, services, treatment and care.

Rationale: Anecdotal feedback indicates that people with a mental illness who are voluntary patients are not being provided with any information about their rights even when they are for it.

Issue 3: Under the heading **Participation** add ...to any procedure **and the prescribing, or giving of medication.**

Rationale: Patient feedback indicates that informed consent when prescribing medication is lacking as well as when nurses are dispensing medication. Informed consent is required during both activities and given the extent to which medications are relied on it perhaps should have its own section.

Suggest adding choose **or decline** to participate ...

Rationale: Patients are often put under undue pressure to see medical students especially when they have an unusual medical condition. Therefore it should be made very clear that they also have a right to refuse to participate.

Closure: Thank you for giving the VMIAC an opportunity to comment.

Isabell Collins
Director