



National Patient Charter of Rights
GPO Box 5480
SYDNEY
NSW 2001

To Whom It May Concern:

Re: Draft National Patient Charter of Rights

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

Following review of the information provided, the Gold Coast Health Community Council has documented some general comments about the Charter, along with specific comments on the topics under the headings specified on pages 13-15 of the Consultation Paper.

General comments:

The Commission should be commended for developing the Charter. A national Charter is particularly relevant to districts facing cross border service delivery challenges. In addition to local health consumers, the Gold Coast Health Service District also manages interstate patients from northern New South Wales.

The Consultation Paper provides the necessary background information in a clear and focussed way. However, the HCC is unsure whether the intent of the document is to outline legal standing or to set out aspirations. The HCC recommends that information regarding the legal standing of the Charter should be included.

Education about the Charter is very important and will be a challenge. A comprehensive and ongoing policy to educate both healthcare providers and patients will be required for the concept of a national Charter to be meaningful and successful.

Comments on the issues outlined:

1. National Patient Charter of Rights and National Patient Charter Principles

The existence of both the Charter and Principles is useful and suitable for use by providers. However, there is a need to develop a patient

friendly, easy to read version. For example, a similar brochure to the *Queensland Health Public Patients' Charter brochure*.

Consider the inclusion of complaint contacts, e.g. in Queensland the Health Quality and Complaints Commission, and the equivalent bodies for the other jurisdiction.

2. Rights included in the Charter

Overall the eight key patient rights outlined in the document capture core patient rights. The Health Community Council recommends adding **quality** health care services. Patients have a right to receiving good quality health services and health service providers have a responsibility to continuously improve the quality of healthcare services.

3. Points included in the Principles

The explanations in the Principles effectively expand on the Rights and assist in the understanding of the Charter.

4. Rights and responsibilities

The focus on patient responsibilities is too narrow and not adequately addressed in the Charter.

We all have a responsibility to maintain, improve or restore our health; to respect the health of others; and to contribute to the efficient operation of healthcare services. The following responsibilities of individuals are listed in the *Scottish National Health Services Patients' Charter*:

(NHS Scotland. The NHS and you. Version 1, 2006.

<http://www.scottishambulance.com/docs/NHS%20and%20You%20SCREEN.pdf>)

- Look after yourself
- Treat healthcare staff considerately
- Keep your appointments
- Let us know if you have to cancel
- Make sure we can contact you
- Follow advice and treatment
- Ask about anything you don't understand
- Use health services appropriately
- Take care with medicines
- Help us stop the spread of infection
- Other ways you can help

Additionally, refer to point 2 above regarding the responsibility of health care providers to provide quality health care services.

5. Existing charters

The Charter should be the principal national document and existing charters and codes need to supplement and not repeat what is in the Charter. For example: the Charter significantly overlaps with the *Draft Code of Health Rights and Responsibilities* (Qld), recently released by the Queensland Health Quality and Complaints Commission, and the *Queensland Health Public Patients' Charter*. This needs to be simplified for patients – a patient admitted to a Queensland hospital theoretically will receive three documents that all significantly overlap. Existing charters and codes therefore need to be changed.

6. Possible uses of the charter

Refer to comment under point 5 above. The Charter will be useful in the training and education of health care workers.

7. How the charter applies in different sectors and settings

The Charter and Principles provide a broad framework and healthcare settings should be able to expand specific topics if needed.

Yours sincerely,



Mary Alcorn

Chair Gold Coast Health Community Council

On behalf of the Gold Coast Health Community Council

