

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **KEY HEALTHCARE RIGHTS CHARTER ENDORSED FOR AUSTRALIA**

Australian Health Ministers have endorsed the *Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights* at their meeting in Canberra yesterday.

The Charter was developed after wide consultation by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care and specifies the key rights of patients and consumers when seeking or receiving healthcare services.

Mr Bill Beerworth, Chairman of the Commission, said "The Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights summarises the basic rights that patients and consumers are entitled to receive when accessing health care services throughout Australia. These rights are Access, Safety, Respect, Communication, Participation, Privacy and Comment."

"The guidance of the late Dr Christopher Newell, the consumer member of the Commission, was pivotal to the development of the Charter. In view of his contribution to the Commission, and particularly to the Charter, the Commission is dedicating the Charter to his memory."

The Charter applies to the whole healthcare system and allows patients, consumers, families, carers and services providers to have a common understanding of the rights of people receiving healthcare. It is applicable to all health settings anywhere in Australia, including public hospitals, private hospitals, general practice and other ambulatory care environments.

The Charter will become the reference point for all healthcare organisations which will use the Charter as the basis for informing patients and consumers of their rights. The Commission will support inclusion of the Charter into accreditation systems and educational curricula to ensure it becomes an important part of the healthcare system in Australia.

The Ministers' endorsement followed an extensive national consultation process to obtain the views of consumers, community groups, health service providers, clinical professional bodies, governments and other organisations and individuals about the Charter.

Consumers have welcomed the endorsement of the *Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights* to which health consumer groups have contributed.

"This Charter provides the framework for health care providers to give consumers high quality care and for consumers to actively seek the best care," said Consumers Health Forum of Australia Executive Director Helen Hopkins.

"Because it has been shaped by all stakeholders, it will benefit everyone and will create an environment for better quality care. We look forward to working with the Commission and the providers on its effective implementation."

The Commission's role as a national leader in safety and quality will help to ensure that the *Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights* has a key role in driving safety and quality improvements and supporting a health system that focuses on the needs of individuals.

For further information please visit [www.safetyandquality.gov.au](http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au) or call (02) 9263 3633.

The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care was established by Health Ministers to lead and coordinate improvements in safety and quality in health care in Australia, by identifying issues and policy directions and recommending priorities for action.