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**Mr Ian Thompson**  
**Deputy Chief Executive**  
**Health Directorate**  
**Email: [ian.Thompson@act.gov.au](mailto:ian.Thompson@act.gov.au)**

Dear Mr Thompson

**Re: Feedback on a Revised Inpatient Guide – Key Messages**

The Health Care Consumers' Association (HCCA) of the ACT was formed over 30 years ago to provide a voice for consumers on local health issues and now provides opportunities for health care consumers in the ACT to participate in all levels of health service planning, policy development and decision making.

HCCA welcomes the opportunity to work with the ACT Health Directorate in revising the Canberra Hospital and Health Services Inpatient Guide. We were impressed with the response to our initial submission on this matter and look forward to continued co-operation with the Health Directorate to develop an Inpatient Guide that will be a valuable resource for all consumers coming to the Hospital.

We think there is potential to develop a co-ordinated and comprehensive approach to consumer information across the Directorate aligned to the National Quality and Safety Health Service Standards. We have previously tabled the Patient First Program as a useful approach to consumer information in health services. This program focuses on increasing the level of understanding consumers have of the risks inherent in health care and strategies they can use to be more informed about their care and reduce these risks. We agree that developing a condensed version of the Inpatient Guide would be useful in the short term but would also encourage consideration of a more comprehensive approach to consumer information.

In compiling our list of key messages for a condensed version of the Guide, we have consulted with those consumers who provided comprehensive feedback on the original Inpatient Guide. As such, the following headings represent what we feel are the most important areas of information for all consumers. We acknowledge that additional information will be required in most cases, but this will vary depending on the consumer and their reason for coming to the Hospital.

We suggest that the condensed version could be divided into colour coded sections labelled 'Admission', 'During your Stay', and 'Discharge'. This would help consumers to easily locate the information they are looking for.

### **Admission**

The first section of the condensed Guide needs to explain to consumers where they need to go when they first arrive. This information was somewhat unclear in the previous version. The following information could also be included in this section

#### **Map and Legend**

Clearly, one of the first things consumers need to know when coming to the Hospital is where to go and how to get there. However, many consumers found the map included in the original version quite difficult to read. We suggest that the map be made at least twice as large and the legend presented in large print. It might be useful to highlight the most important areas such as the main reception. Consumers also need to know about where to park and how to get to the hospital by bus. Again the information included in the previous guide was somewhat vague.

#### **Preparing to come to Hospital**

Most consumers thought the checklist of things to bring to the hospital was a good idea, and should also be included in the condensed version. However, following on from the discussion in the meeting with Ian Thompson and Heather McKay, we would like to see some allowances made for valuables such as phones and wallets. In the previous version, consumers were simply told that they should not bring any valuables with them. This is highly impractical for most consumers. A better option would be to include an item such as 'personal items – only if necessary'.

### **During Your Stay**

#### **Charter of Healthcare Rights**

The Charter of Healthcare Rights is an essential resource that needs to be made as prominent as possible to consumers. Ensuring that consumers are aware of their rights is a good way to encourage them to speak up and engage with their health care. This in turn would make it more likely for errors to be picked up before they become a serious risk to the consumer.

#### **Questions to ask your Care Team**

This is another effective means of encouraging consumers to engage with their healthcare. It would also be good to explain in this section the reasons for Hospital staff continually asking consumers to provide their name and date of birth.

## **Acknowledgment of Consent**

It must be made clear to consumers that certain treatments will not progress without their consent, and that they are well within their rights to withhold it. They are also entitled to be provided with sufficient information before agreeing to a procedure. Often consumers feel as though they are obligated to sign a consent form due to the unequal relationship between clinicians and consumers and the rushed manner in which the process is often conducted. This section could also include contact details for the Consumer Engagement Team and the Health Services Commissioner at the Human Rights Commission.

## **FAQs**

This section would be useful for miscellaneous information that consumers most want to know. This would include information about visiting hours and how they can be contacted by relatives during their stay. As this condensed version will only contain the most important information, it would be good to provide consumers with a contact for any additional information they might need.

## **Discharge**

It is important that this section encourages consumers to start asking about discharge planning as early as possible during their stay. They need to know who to talk to about making different arrangements and what services are available to them outside of the Hospital to assist with their rehabilitation. Again, the checklist included in the previous version would be a good start.


## **Additional Information**

Information about anaesthetics, length of stay and fasting requirements etc. are also very important but will vary for each consumer. As such, this should be provided to consumers individually prior to admission in written form wherever possible. More general information about the roles of different staff members and the 'A-Z list of services' could be included in the full version.

The Quality and Safety Standards are important, but not likely to be of interest to consumers who simply want to know what they have to do when coming to the hospital. This information may be better presented as posters and separate pamphlets available at reception or in waiting rooms.

We look forward to collaborating further with you on developing the Inpatient Guide and a strategy for consumer information across Canberra Hospital and Health Services.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Darlene Cox', is centered below the closing. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'D' and 'C'.

Darlene Cox  
Executive Director  
Health Care Consumers' Association

15 February 2013