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Ms Deborah Colliver
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Community Health Programs
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Dear Ms Colliver

Re: HCCA Feedback on the ACT Women's Health Service Brochure

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 provide feedback on the ACT Women's Health Service Brochure. We strongly support the ACT Women's Health Service and believe it is essential that all women in our community are made aware of the health services on offer to meet their particular needs. Our feedback is primarily based on the comments we have received from our members.

Service information

Overall, the feedback we received was positive. Consumers appreciated the layout and the information included in the brochure. However, a few concerns were raised about the clarity of the language used in describing the Service.

Consumers were concerned that some of the paragraphs contain fairly bureaucratic language which would be unclear for some consumers. For instance, the word "facilitates" could be replaced with "promotes" or "supports" at the top of the centre page. The phrase 'across the lifespan' could be replaced with 'for women of all ages'.

The paragraphs describing the services provided do not read as though they are directed towards consumers. This could be partly addressed by rewriting them in the second person. In addition, some consumers were confused by the information about the nurse practitioner. It might be better just to say that "a qualified nurse will be available to help you with a wide range of health issues". One person also commented that they would rather be referred to as a "low income earner" than "financially disadvantaged".

The practical implications of 'giving priority' to certain women are also unclear. That is, will women who are not rated as high priority just have to wait longer, or will they be turned

away? In the case of the latter, it would be important to suggest alternative options for health services. If women are still unsure whether the service would be suitable for them, it would be good to mention that they can always call and ask a staff member.

Women would also want to know whether they need to call in advance and make an appointment or just show up at the facility.

Additional information

Consumers also thought it would be good to emphasise that the services are provided free of charge. For instance, the tag line on the front page could be “a free health service for women, by women”. Cost is likely to be an issue for the women whom this health service would benefit the most.

In the section noting which services cannot be provided by the Women’s Health Service, there needs to be information on where to go instead. At the very least, it needs to say that people experiencing the symptoms of a heart attack should go to the ED. Consumers could also be directed to the Walk-In Centre or their local pharmacy for help with coughs and colds. This section also needs to be clearly separated from the text above it, as some consumers found this confusing.

Under “Locations”, it would be good to include either contact numbers or addresses for the additional outreach counselling and women’s health services. There could also be some indication that further contact details are available over the page.

Contact details and directions

On the page with directions and contact details, there needs to be further directions for where to go after arriving at the ACT Health Building. For instance, what floor is the service located on and will there be clear signage?

Consumers also commented that for the sake of consistency, the brochure should always use the same term to refer to the city. Currently, “the city”, “Civic” and “Canberra City” appear throughout the brochure.

Accessibility

On the accessibility page, consumers suggested that three or four sentences in different languages could be included at the bottom of the page directing women to the interpreting service. We would also be interested to know whether there will be versions of the brochure printed in different languages. The Service is advertising itself as an alternative for consumers who have difficulty accessing health services due to language barriers, so it is essential to ensure that they are aware of the option.

One consumer noted a typo in the second dot point, which should read “then ask *for*” instead of “then ask or”. The publication number in the copyright section will also need to be added.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or wish to discuss our feedback further.

