



## **Submission by the ACT Mental Health Consumer Network on Towards a Patient and Family-Centred Care Model in the ACT**

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**Submission by the ACT Mental Health Consumer Network on:  
*Towards a Patient and Family-Centred Care Model in the ACT.***

**Background**

This submission has been prepared by the ACT Mental Health Consumer Network in response to a request for feedback from ACT Health on the discussion paper entitled *Towards a Patient and Family-Centred Care Model in the ACT.*

The ACT Mental Health Consumer Network (the Network) is the peak body for mental health consumers in the ACT. Run by consumers for consumers, our aim is to advocate for services and support for mental health consumers to assist them to live fuller, healthier and more valued lives in the community. We do this through advocacy, representation, lobbying and active involvement in new developments in the mental health sector, as well as in the wider health and community sectors.

**Introduction**

We are strongly in support of a Patient and Family-Centred Care Model in the ACT which would facilitate a partnership approach to the physical and mental health care of Consumers. We support a healthcare system that allows Consumers to have access to the care they want, when they need it and in a way that suits them which includes them as a Consumer and those people that have a caring role in their lives. This approach is also consistent with the underlying principle of the *4As Framework for Preventing Further Episodes of Mental Illness*<sup>1</sup>:

*Mental health care should be responsive to the continuing and differing needs of consumers, families and carers, and communities.*

We advocate that The Patient and Family-Centred Care Model would promote prevention and early intervention and support Consumers to have greater control of their lives.

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<sup>1</sup> Rickwood, Debra, 2005, Pathways to Recovery - *4As Framework for Preventing Further Episodes of Mental Illness*, Department of Health & Ageing. Pg. 6

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation 1:** Make reference to the Mental Health Recovery in the ACT document.

**Recommendation 2:** Include contact Information about the ACT Mental Health Consumer Network Consumer Representatives Program in the framework for the Patient and Family-Centred Care Model in the ACT.

**Recommendation 3:** Include contact information about the Carers ACT Mental Health Carers Representatives Program in the framework for the Patient and Family-Centred Care Model in the ACT.

**Recommendation 4:** Make reference to the Mental Health Consumer and Carer identified workforce which will be included in the National Mental Health Workforce Strategy when it is issued later in 2011.

**Recommendation 5:** Evidence from a range of consumer stories and experiences during the implementation of FCPs should be sought through consultations with consumer advocacy groups, such as the Network.

## Mental Health Recovery in the ACT

The discussion paper acknowledges that '*ACT Health is not moving towards an unknown model*' (pg7) and we have been pleased to see Mental Health ACT embrace the Mental Health Recovery Model as described in the document '*Mental Health Recovery in the ACT*'.<sup>2</sup> We believe that a Patient and Family-Centred Care Model in the ACT will reinforce the principles of Recovery. There has already been discussion internationally about 'Patient-Centred Care within the Recovery Model'.<sup>3</sup> We recommend that the framework includes information about the Mental Health Recovery Model.

## Patient and Family Advisory Councils

We support the notion of Patient and Family Advisory Councils and advise that the ACT Mental Health Consumer Network coordinates a volunteer Consumer Representatives Program as well as delivering Advocacy and Representation Training for Mental Health Consumers which includes information about self-advocacy, social justice, human rights, mental health literacy and legislation relevant to the mental health sector. We advocate that our training together with regular attendance at the Network's Consumer Representatives Forum which is held monthly, will provide those who participate on Patient and Family Advisory Councils

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.health.act.gov.au/c/health?a=sendfile&ft=p&fid=-1134856058&sid=>

<sup>3</sup> The 2010 Joint Conference of the Schizophrenia Society of Saskatchewan Inc. and Canadian Mental Health Association (Saskatchewan Division) - At the Centre of the Circle - Patient-centred Care within the Recovery Model.

<http://www.schizophrenia.sk.ca/at-the-centre-of-the-circle-patient-centred-care-within-the-recovery-model/>

with the information they need to ‘*see the bigger picture*’ and become ‘*interested in more than one agenda issue*’ (pg 17). Therefore we recommend that you include contact information about the ACT Mental Health Consumer Network Consumer Representatives Program in the framework for the Patient and Family-Centred Care Model in the ACT.

We also recommend that you include contact information about Carers ACT<sup>4</sup> which coordinates the Mental Health Carers Representatives Program and also delivers a training course to support the representative activities of Mental Health Carers.

## **Peer Specialists**

We support the engagement of Peer Workers who would become an integral part of the treating team and provide their expertise of the lived experience of mental illness to assist the recovery of patients of Mental Health services. However we advocate that it is not possible for Peer Workers who work with clinicians and allied health professionals on the clinical team to effectively fulfil the role of a Peer Advocate (trained volunteer) or an Individual Advocate (paid worker) due to an actual or at the very least a perceived conflict of interest. We recommend that the framework make reference to the mental health consumer and carer identified workforce<sup>5</sup> which will be included in the National Mental Health Workforce Strategy.<sup>6</sup>

Peer Specialists as defined by their duties in the framework align more closely with the role of Consumer Consultants who are currently employed by ACT Health in the Mental Health Division. The title of Peer Specialist is not used within the Mental Health Consumer community in the ACT and therefore there may be objections if the framework introduces a new Mental Health Peer Workforce identifier without first consulting the broader Consumer Worker community.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback. We appreciate the time and effort that has been put into producing this important document.



Dalane Drexler  
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<sup>4</sup> Carers ACT Policy Officer for Mental Health Carers is Sue Thomas, phone number 6296-9935

<sup>5</sup> National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum Position Statement – Supporting and Developing the mental health consumer and carer identified workforce – a strategic approach to recovery, 2010

<sup>6</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> National Mental Health Plan – An agenda for collaborative government action in mental health 2009 – 2014, National Mental Health Strategy, Priority Area 4. Quality improvement and innovation. Pg vii.