



ACT  
Mental Health  
Consumer Network

29 February 2024

Gillian Sharp

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Dear Gillian

Review of Canberra Health Services Guideline, Mental Health, Justice Health, Alcohol and Drug Services (MHJHADS) Justice Health Operational Guideline – Alexander Maconochie Centre

This letter has been prepared by ACT Mental Health Consumer Network (the Network) in response to the invitation from Canberra Health Services. It incorporates written feedback received from consumers in relation to the Canberra Health Services Guideline: MHJHADS Justice Health Operational Guideline – Alexander Maconochie Centre.

The Network welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Justice Health Operational Guideline – Alexander Maconochie Centre (the Guideline). Consumer feedback is focussed on the inclusion of mental illness within the Guideline and the connection between other AMC mental health documents.

1. Consumers recommend that a specific section be included in the Guideline that covers Mental Health as there is for Communicable Diseases and Alcohol and Other Drugs. In addition, they recommended that mental illness and/or mental disorder (mental illness) should be included in the list of illnesses looked after by the complex care team, Section 4, noting that the more times mental illness appears in the Guideline, the more likely the treating team will be aware of it and manage it appropriately.
2. Consumers recommend a nurse specifically trained in mental health be available at all times to undertake the induction to custody assessment. Consumers were

concerned that under this Guideline certain mental health indicators could be missed as in the absence of a Custody Mental Health (CMH) Nurse at intake the Justice Health (JH) nurse would do the mental health assessment (p. 14). The Guideline does not indicate whether a person would be provided the opportunity to have an assessment by a CMH nurse, which is essential if the consumer involved has not been diagnosed with a mental illness and/or disorder prior to their incarceration.

3. Consumers noted that the Guideline specifically identifies physical health concerns requiring review by an MO and recommend that the same be done for mental health concerns.
4. Consumers recommend that along with referrals to AOD, CCT etc (p. 15), there should also be referrals to specialist Mental Health services where appropriate. In addition, mental illness should be included in the list of illnesses that proactive case management is available for (p. 19).
5. Consumers recommend that Section 2 of the Guideline refer to the Suicide Prevention and Intervention Framework AMC\_ACT Court Cells.
6. Consumers understand that staff are working under two separate guidelines – JH and CMH. However, there is no cross link to the CMH Guideline for staff to understand where the two guidelines intersect. Consumers were concerned that this lack of understanding could result in some services not being appropriately or adequately provided.

Consumers noted they had previously provided feedback on the ACT Detainee Health and Wellbeing Strategy (March 2023) which identified how CMH and JH should work together. Consumers wondered where this document was and questioned whether it was referenced during the drafting of the Guideline.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Justice Health Operational Guideline for the Alexander Maconochie Centre. The Network looks forward to receiving further consultation requests in the future. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this feedback, please do not hesitate to contact me on 02 6230 5796 or [executive@actmhcncn.org.au](mailto:executive@actmhcncn.org.au).

Yours sincerely



Jennifer Nixon  
Chief Executive Officer (Acting)