



ACT
Mental Health
Consumer Network

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Dear Imran

Review of Canberra Health Services Model of Care – Speciality Alcohol and Drug Services

This letter has been prepared by the ACT Mental Health Consumer Network (the Network) in response to the invitation from Canberra Health Services (CHS). It incorporates both written and verbal feedback received from consumers in relation to the CHS Model of Care – Speciality Alcohol and Drug Services (the MoC). The Network welcomes the invitation to provide feedback on the MoC. We extend our thanks for your flexibility regarding the submission date of this feedback.

It is essential that the framework developed prioritises a consumer-centered approach. This means that care should be tailored to meet the individual needs of each person, ensuring that it is equitable and accessible for all. We also emphasise the importance of grounding practices in evidence-based methods while being culturally responsive to the diverse communities in the ACT.

Moreover, the care provided should be holistic, addressing not only the mental health aspects but also the physical, emotional and social well-being of consumers. Coordination among different services is crucial to ensure a seamless experience for

consumers. It is essential to maintain a non-judgmental, stigma-free environment that promotes healing and recovery. A trauma-informed approach is vital to understanding and addressing the unique experiences of consumers, particularly those with histories of trauma. The focus should also be on recovery-oriented practices and harm minimisation strategies.

Specific Feedback

1. *Therapeutic Support:* We are pleased to see the inclusion of therapeutic animals in the Withdrawal Unit (WU). Additionally, the integration of activities such as yoga, tai chi and physiotherapy is commendable. These activities can significantly enhance the recovery experience for consumers. However, it is essential that these interventions are tailored to meet the specific needs of each person, as different individuals may respond differently to various therapies.

2. *Alternative Activity Programs:* We encourage exploring opportunities for alternative or external activity programs for consumers who have been medically cleared. Engaging with community resources can provide consumers with additional support options and enhance their overall wellbeing during recovery.

3. *Support for Consumers Under 18:* It is crucial to establish clear protocols for supporting consumers under the age of 18 who are undergoing withdrawal. There is a need to ensure that there are appropriate services and resources available for this age group, particularly for those who are experiencing dual-diagnosis issues involving both mental health and substance use. Tailoring the approach to meet the developmental needs of younger consumers is vital for their successful recovery.

4. *Accessibility for Consumers with Physical Disability:* Accessibility challenges must be addressed for consumers with physical disability in accessing residential rehabilitation units. It is imperative that facilities are equipped to accommodate all consumers, ensuring that everyone has equal access to the care they need.

5. *Staffing Profile:* It is concerning that the current staffing profile does not appear to include peer workers. Peer support plays a critical role in the recovery process, offering lived experience and understanding that can greatly benefit consumers in treatment. We strongly advocate for the inclusion of peer workers in the staffing model.

6. *Post-Withdrawal Support:* Aftercare is a vital component of the recovery journey. While we recognise the value of the Southside Step-Up/Step-Down program, we encourage further exploration of additional aftercare options. It is essential to establish connections between patients and local general practitioners to facilitate ongoing support and continuity of care after discharge from the withdrawal unit.

Thank you for considering our feedback; we look forward to seeing the continued development of this important initiative.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this feedback, please do not hesitate to contact us on (02) 6230 5796 or executive@actmhc.org.au.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to provide feedback on the MoC. We look forward to receiving further consultation requests in future.

Yours sincerely



Dalane Drexler
Chief Executive Officer