ACT
Mental Health
Consumer Network

22 October 2025

Zoia Rusanov
Policy Coordinator
Canberra Health Services
zoia.rusanov@act.gov.au
policyathealth@act.gov.au

Dear Zoia

Review of CHS Procedure: Policy Document Development and Review

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 feedback from an organisational review by the Network in relation to the CHS Procedure: Policy Document Development and Review (the Procedure). The Network welcomes the invitation to provide feedback on the Procedure.

Our feedback on the Procedure concerns Section 7 (pp.12-13):

- This section should include guidance regarding advised consultation timelines. The *Engaging Canberrans: A guide to community engagement* (2011) advises that "[w]hen engaging peak bodies it is important to allow sufficient time for adequate consideration of your proposal, policy or community engagement strategy" (p. 13). It further recommends that consultations with peak bodies allow for a minimum of six weeks for community organisations to provide feedback. The Network receives many consultation requests throughout the year, and we require appropriate notice so that we can arrange for consumers to review and provide feedback on documents under review. Including this will not only assist Action Officers with planning their work, it will also increase the likelihood that they will receive considered feedback from consumers.

- For seeking consumer feedback, the Procedure advises Action Officers to "find a consumer representative" (p. 12). This statement is misleading. When CHS convenes a committee or governance group, a consumer representative may be sought by contacting respective peak body. When CHS is requesting consumer feedback on a policy or procedure, a consumer feedback request should be made to peak bodies and other relevant organisations. The former involves arranging for a consumer representative to attend and participate in a committee while the latter involves organising a group of consumers to review and provide feedback on a policy or procedure. For the purposes of this Procedure then, this statement should read "To request consumer feedback, contact:".
- When requesting consumer feedback on a policy or procedure, the Procedure directs Action Officers to contact "ACT Mental Health Consumer Network by email actmhcn@actmhcn.org.au". The email address for this purpose should be amended to policy@actmhcn.org.au which will put Action Officers in direct contact with the Network's policy team.

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Procedure. We look forward to providing further consumer feedback once the structural concerns have been resolved.

Yours sincerely

Dalane Drexler
Chief Executive Officer

ACT Mental Health Consumer Network
Phone: (02) 6230 5796
GPO Box 836 Canberra ACT 2601