



ACT  
Mental Health  
Consumer Network

29 January 2026

Genevieve Whitlam  
MHJHADS  
Canberra Health Services  
[genevieve.whitlam@act.gov.au](mailto:genevieve.whitlam@act.gov.au)  
[CHSGMMHJHADS@act.gov.au](mailto:CHSGMMHJHADS@act.gov.au)

Dear Gen

**Review of Supporting access of CHS employees to CHS mental health, alcohol and drug, and other health services Guideline**

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 Supporting access of CHS employees to CHS mental health, alcohol and drug, and other health services Guideline (the Guideline). The Network welcomes the invitation to provide feedback on the Guideline.

Consumers noted that the Guideline does not reference advance care planning or care plans developed prior to periods of acute distress (e.g. Advance Agreement, Advance Consent Direction). Consumers suggested that including guidance on how these instruments under the *Mental Health Act 2015 (ACT)* are recognised within this Guideline would strengthen consumer-centred practice. Additionally, there is no guidance on how the Guideline applies in crisis situations where consumers may have reduced decision-making capacity. Consumers suggested that information clarifying safeguards and decision-making processes during periods of reduced capacity be included.

Across the Guideline, there is no explicit mention of support for consumers from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. Consumers noted the absence of guidance on language support, interpreter use or culturally appropriate communication. Including CALD considerations would improve accessibility and equity.

In the Scope section (p.2), the term “extended family” is used without a clear definition. Consumers noted that concepts of family vary greatly, particularly:

- for consumers who may lack close familial ties; and
- across cultures, specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, where kinship extends beyond western family models.

Clarifying this term would support consistent and culturally safe application of the Guideline.

In Section 3 (p.4), in the section leading with ‘Ensure that a clinician...’, the requirement that individuals must not disclose a current or previous employment relationship with CHS is stated without explanation. Consumers felt disclosure should be a consumer-led decision and that lived-experience peer support can be valuable. Consumers suggested that a clear rationale and explanation should be provided.

Section 8 provides limited information on how surveys and interviews are conducted, and does not clearly explain how data is stored, accessed or protected. Consumers identified privacy and accessibility of records as key concerns. Expanding this section to briefly address consultation methods and data safeguards would improve transparency and trust.

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

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

Yours sincerely



Dalane Drexler  
Chief Executive Officer