



ACT  
Mental Health  
Consumer Network

21 April 2026

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Dear Deepthy

### **Review of CHS Drug and Alcohol Sentencing List Procedure**

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 verbal feedback received from consumers in relation to the CHS Drug and Alcohol Sentencing List (DASL) Procedure (the Procedure). The Network welcomes the invitation to provide feedback on the Procedure.

Consumers<sup>1</sup> highlighted the following issues for consideration and review:

1. Consumers expressed the need for clearer and more specific language throughout the document. In Section 1, particularly within the subsections addressing eligibility and suitability assessments (p. 4, p. 6), consumers noted

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<sup>1</sup> *The Network uses the term 'consumer' because it is the established and widely understood descriptor across ACT legislation, policy frameworks and advisory structures, ensuring clarity and consistency in our systemic advocacy. At the same time, we recognise that people with lived experience do not all identify with the same language, and that terms such as 'people with lived experience' and 'peer' are increasingly used in contemporary contexts were relevant. Our approach is to retain 'consumer' where required for system engagement, while respecting individuals' right to self-identify in the way that best reflects their experience. This supports inclusion, aligns with national lived experience guidance, and maintains the Network's authority and effectiveness within the mental health system.*

the absence of explicit information regarding the mental health support available during these processes. Making this support visible within the procedure would help ensure that it is consistently provided and understood by both staff and consumers.

2. Similarly, the instruction on page 6 regarding documentation in the Digital Health Record (DHR) would benefit from further clarification, particularly in relation to the criteria for uploading referral-related documents. Providing clearer guidance in this area would support consistent practice and reduce ambiguity, especially for new staff or students interpreting the procedure.
3. Consumers also identified a need for improved communication and accessibility within case management responsibilities. In Section 2 (p. 8), it was suggested that more detailed information be provided on how consumers can contact their case manager and access information throughout their participation in the DASL program. Strengthening this aspect of the procedure would help reduce uncertainty, support engagement, and ensure that consumers are able to seek clarification and assistance when needed.
4. Concerns were also raised regarding the adequacy of aftercare provisions (p. 14). Consumers recommended that stronger protections and more structured follow-up be included for individuals who have completed a Drug and Alcohol Treatment Order (DATO), particularly those who have experienced crisis during the program. Suggestions included increased follow-up contact and attention to ongoing mental health status and accommodation needs. This reflects the recognition that the transition period following program completion can be a point of heightened vulnerability, and that continuity of care is essential to support longer-term stability and recovery.

Overall, the feedback highlights practical areas where the procedure could be strengthened to improve clarity, consistency, and responsiveness to consumer needs. They are grounded in lived experience and reflect trauma-informed and consumer-centred care. Addressing these issues would enhance the usability of the procedure for staff and contribute to more supportive and effective service delivery for consumers.

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@actmhc.org.au](mailto:executive@actmhc.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