



Private Mental Health Consumer Carer Network (Australia) Limited

engage, empower, enable choice in private mental health

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Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care
GPO Box 5480
Sydney NSW 2001

Submission:

Consultation Draft of the National Consensus Statement: *Essential elements for recognising and responding to deterioration in a person's mental state*

The *Private Mental Health Consumer Carer Network (Australia)* (hereafter Network) represents Australians who have private health insurance and/or who receive their treatment and care, and those that care for them, from private sector settings for their *mental illnesses or disorders*. As our title implies, the Network is the authoritative voice for consumers and carers of private mental health settings including those services provided by psychiatrists and other professionals in private practice.

The Network is committed to working with the Commission in addressing the needs of people with a mental illness and we bring a mental health consumer and carer perspective. Mental health brings with it many challenges. As a consumer and carer organisation we are in a position to provide direct 'lived' experiences and would welcome the opportunity to engage in further discussions.

As such we would like to provide a response to the Consultation Draft of the National Consensus Statement: *Essential elements for recognising and responding to deterioration in a person's mental state* of May 2016.

We are very supportive of the Statement in particular that it describes best practice in supporting safe and appropriate health care to people who experience a deterioration in mental state. As a mental health advocacy organisation we are strongly supportive of 'advance directives' completed when people are essentially well, that is in a position to clearly articulate their desires in regard to psychiatric treatment and health care more broadly. We advocate for this and have a 2010 Policy around this issue developed specifically for mental health consumers and carers. This can be viewed on our website www.pmhccn.com.au policies.

It is difficult for consumers and carers in some sense to appreciate the 'recovery' concept when they still experience symptoms and live with the effects of psychotropic medications. However we fully support a recovery oriented approach to health care.

We fully support the focus on trauma informed care and practice and have been advocating for some time that all mental health services both public and private introduce this concept within practice. We know first hand how some practices contribute to re-traumatising the consumer.

We fully support the Guiding Principles and feel that the Commission has captured within the Statement the key issues from mental health consumers and carers' perspectives. We continue to promote a 'partnership approach' a triangle of care if you like involving consumers, carers and clinicians in any health care setting and we are very pleased that the Statement captures these key concepts.

In terms of a process of care, we fully support the inclusions. A key factor is to recognise when a person's behaviour, emotions, functioning change as a precursor to deterioration in mental state. We fully support an empathetic and calm approach by health care professionals and this also is a key to de-escalating situations where adverse behaviour seems to be presenting.

We fully support the recognition of deterioration in a person's mental state and the actions proposed within the Statement. In terms of escalating care, it must be noted that within the private psychiatric hospital sector, the only jurisdictions which can cater for a higher level of need for containment under mental health legislation is Queensland and South Australia. This results in consumers in private hospital facilities in other jurisdictions frequently being transferred by ambulance or police to public mental health facilities.

We also raise the issue of peer workers where the private sector is yet to fully accept integration within their hospital workforce. Peer workers have the benefit of being there before, knowing what really assists in supporting someone experiencing signs of mental deterioration.

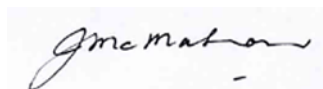
It must also be noted that whilst people are admitted involuntarily to a psychiatric facility, this does not in itself preclude them from understanding what is being proposed. We strongly support joint decision making which must include family or other carers within these processes. Communication is also imperative and the Network believes that this is a fundamental requirement in all health settings.

We strongly support the development of a culture within the health services starting from the Executive, of promoting safe and supportive awareness of mental deterioration.

The Network is pleased to have this opportunity of providing comments to the Statement. We are fully supportive of the content and congratulate the Commission in its desire to highlight and capture this essential component of best practice across all health care settings.

Please contact me on email: jmcmahon@senet.com.au or telephone: 1300 620 042 if you would like any further clarification.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J McMahon', is enclosed in a light blue rectangular box.

Ms Janne McMahon OAM
Chair and Executive Officer.