

26 July 2011

The Secretary
Senate Community Affairs Committee

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**Submission from the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards (ACHS):
Inquiry into Commonwealth Funding and Administration of Mental Health Services**

The primary issues of relevance to ACHS in the Terms of Reference of the Senate Community Affairs Committee's Inquiry into Commonwealth Funding and Administration of Mental Health Services are:

- (h) the delivery of a national mental health commission and
- (j) any other related matter.

(h) The delivery of a national mental health commission

ACHS welcomes the intention to 'drive a more transparent and accountable mental health system in both the health and non-health spheres', as outlined in the May 2011 National Mental Health Reform Statement¹ and the Budget 2011-12 Delivering better hospitals, Mental Health and Health Services paper².

It is encouraging to note that the Commission will 'report on Australian Government and state system performance against service expectations'.¹ It is unclear however, what system performance¹ will be measured against, and no reference is made to the recently updated National Standards for Mental Health Services 2010, nor an accreditation framework to drive implementation of, or monitor assessment against, these standards.

ACHS anticipates that the jurisdictions and/or the Commission will clarify what such 'service expectations' are, and suggests that the standards and criteria outlined within the National Standards for Mental Health Services 2010 should inform these expectations.

The National Mental Health Reform Statement refers to the Commission drawing on 'ongoing and extensive national data collections funded by the Department of Health and Ageing'.¹ Although ACHS has been undertaking reviews (surveys) against the National Standards for Mental Health Services since 2000, performance data has not been requested by the Department of Health and Ageing. We would welcome the opportunity to work with the Commission by providing such information. ACHS also has the capacity to analyse captured data if it would be of assistance to the Commission.

(j) Other related matter:

Establishment of a new national mental health consumer body [included in budget documents but not specifically mentioned in the Terms of Reference].

ACHS supports the establishment of a new national mental health consumer body 'to distil the voices of consumers and embed their experiences within policymaking and program development and implementation'¹ / 'provide a strong and consolidated consumer voice, which will contribute to more responsive and accountable policy and program directions within the sector'.²

ACHS strongly believes in the value of consumer participation in health care and this is reflected throughout our Evaluation and Quality Improvement Program (EQuIP5) and other products. Additionally, consumer surveyors have been trained and have participated in ACHS Mental Health In-Depth Reviews against the National Standards for Mental Health Services since 1999. This is widely seen as a beneficial strategy, with member organisations and their consumers / patients finding particular value in the peer-to-peer approach that is brought to the survey process.

Yours sincerely,

BW Johnston
Chief Executive

1. Roxon N, MP, Macklin J, MP and Butler M, MP. National Mental Health Reform - Ministerial Statement. 2011.
2. Australian Government. *Delivering better hospitals, mental health and health services*. Budget 2011-2012. Canberra ACT; Commonwealth of Australia; 2011.