



23 AUG 2011

Dr Ian Holland  
Committee Secretary  
Community Affairs References Committee  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Enquiries to: Dr Elizabeth Leitch  
Director  
Statutory Administration and  
Policy Unit, Mental Health  
Alcohol and Other Drugs  
Directorate  
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File Ref: DG063948

Dear Dr Holland

I refer to your letter dated 5 August 2011, regarding a submission received by the Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee from the Mental Health Action Reform Group (MHARG) in relation to the Inquiry into the Funding and Administration of Mental Health Services.

MHARG is a recently established community action group. It aims to campaign for mental health reform by lobbying State and Federal Government authorities on behalf of mental health consumers who are undergoing treatment as inpatients or outpatients in the public mental health system. I am aware of the group as it recently wrote to me, to the Director of Mental Health and to directors of mental health services across Queensland. A copy of this correspondence is included in your letter. I have since responded to MHARG on behalf of Queensland Health and government mental health services.

As you would appreciate, specific responses to MHARG's allegations of non-compliance with the *Mental Health Act 2000* (the Act) could not be made as MHARG did not provide sufficient evidence or detail to allow investigation or substantiation of the claims. However, Queensland Health's response did highlight some of the safeguards and protections for people with mental illness that are built into the legislation and the statewide programs for monitoring and improving compliance with the Act. I have enclosed a copy of my letter of response to MHARG for your information.

Queensland Health is committed to upholding the rights of people with mental illness and providing the best possible service to all mental health consumers. To that end, we welcome feedback and recommendations for improving the quality of care provided by mental health services across the state. I can assure you that detailed and comprehensive consideration is given to any complaints about Queensland Health services, including mental health services, and appropriate action is taken where required.

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There are a number of avenues available for raising specific complaints about mental health services which are set out, among other places, in the Statement of Rights for Involuntary Patients. The Act requires the director to provide a written statement about the rights of involuntary patients. This statement must be prominently displayed in all mental health services and include information on the rights of patients and allied persons, and the right to make a complaint and details of how to make a complaint. A copy of the statement of rights must be given to the person on admission to the mental health service, and must be explained to the person in the language and in a way that enables the information to be understood by the person.

Should you require further information, Queensland Health's contact is Dr Elizabeth Leitch, Director, Statutory Administration and Policy Unit, Mental Health Alcohol and Other Drugs Directorate, on telephone (07) 3328 9530.

Yours sincerely



*tw* Dr Tony O'Connell  
**Director-General**

*Encl.*