

Council of Australian Governments,
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
PO Box 6500
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Sent via Australia post.

Our organisations (as signatories) to this letter hold grave concerns that the National Safety and Quality Standards (hereafter NSQHS) will replace the National Standards for Mental Health Services (hereafter NSMHS) in the near future. There are a number of standards in particular *Standard 7 - Carers, Standard 10 - Access, Support, Treatment and 10.1 Supporting Recovery*. We know that accreditation against the NSMHS was a requirement for a number of years under the states and territories National Funding Agreements however this is not the current case, rather jurisdictions can opt out of this process.

There is an emphasis on the NSQHS and all health services/organisations are required to undergo accreditation against these. There is therefore a much greater awareness and acceptance of these with the NSMHS being given lesser importance.

Mental health consumers and carers rely heavily on the intent and content of the NSMHS. A lot of time, energy and financial commitment have been expended by a Consortium in developing a *Practical Guide for Working with Carers of People with a Mental Illness* and accompanying resources to support implementation of the 6 partnership standards within this Guide. It is particularly important that the intent of *Standard 7 – Carers* is incorporated in any accreditation process. Equally important is *Standard 10 – Access, Support, Treatment and 10.1 Supporting Recovery*. We have approached the ACSQHC previously regarding *Standard 7: Carers* and the assimilation within the NSQHS to no avail. The NSQHS also capture carers broadly as ‘consumers’ adding still further confusion to the essential role carers play.

The advice from the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Healthcare is that only the safety criteria within the NSMHS will be captured within the supplement planned to align the NSQHS and the NSMHS. This is also referred to in the Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan – Implementation Plan, Priority Area 7: 21.2, 21.4, with 22 as under:

Governments will develop a mental health supplement to the NSQHS Standards (2nd ed.) which will align the NSQHS Standards and the NSMHS.

The NSQHS Standards (2nd ed.) and its mental health supplement will guide implementation of the Standards for all mental health services in public and private hospitals and community services provided by local health networks to ensure a single set of standards for these services.

The NSMHS will be maintained as the authoritative reference point on quality mental health care for continuing use by those organisations not subject to the NSQHS Standards.

The role will be allocated to the SQPSC to work with the ACSQHC to develop a mental health supplement to the NSQHS Standards (2nd ed.).

As organisations representing the views, issues and needs of consumers and carers, we strongly believe that relegating the NSMHS to a reference document only for organisations which are not subject to the NSQHS Standards is a retrograde step.

Our organisations believe that much more than the safety aspects of the NSMHS must be captured. There must be an additional 'supplement' for Mental Health Services undertaking the NSQHS Standards 2nd Edition that includes those NSMHS not covered in 2nd Edition.

in any supplement developed by the Safety and Quality Partnership Standing Committee. It is essential that the intent and content of the NSMHS in particular *Standard 7: carers and Standard 10: Standard 10 – Access, Support, Treatment and 10.1 Supporting Recovery* is reflected within the linked template.

Our organisations are seeking a commitment to ensure the inclusion of **all the criteria** that directly address the response of mental health services to consumers and carers will be retained and reflected in the linked template.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further. Please contact Ms Janne McMahon OAM, Chair and Executive Officer, Private Mental Health Consumer Carer Network (Australia) on 1300 620 042 or email: jmcmahon@senet.com.au

Yours faithfully,

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Chair & Executive Officer

Consumer Co-Chair

Carer Co-Chair



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CC:

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