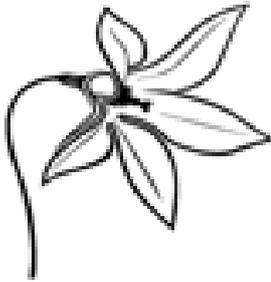


Therese Foster
Mental Health Policy Branch
ACT Health
Email: therese.foster@act.gov.au



**Submission to
Draft ACT Charter of Rights for
Mental Health Consumers**

**Women With Disabilities ACT
(WWDACT)**

<http://wwdct09.blogspot.com>

March 2011

Women With Disabilities ACT acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as the traditional owners and continuing custodians of the lands of the ACT and we pay our respects to the Elders, families and ancestors. We acknowledge that the effect of forced removal of Indigenous children from their families as well as past racist policies and actions continues today.

This document was prepared by:

Nicole O'Callaghan (WWDACT Policy/Administrative Officer)

Sue Salthouse (Convenor, WWDACT)

Marcia Williams (Executive Director, WCHM)

Enquiries on this response should be directed to

Nicole O'Callaghan

Policy/Administrative officer

Women With Disabilities ACT

wwdact@wchm.org.au

or

Convenor, WWDACT: Sue Salthouse

sudata@optusnet.com.au

or

Executive Director, WCHM: Marcia Williams

ed@wchm.org.au

PO Box 385, Mawson, ACT, 2607

Phone (02) 6290 2166

Facsimile (02) 6286 4742

admin@whcm.org.au

www.wchm.org.au

Introduction

Women With Disabilities ACT (WWDACT) is an organisation for women with all types of disabilities in the Australian Capital Territory. WWDACT is an affiliate of the national peak organisation Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) and is similarly run by women with disabilities, for women with disabilities. WWDACT draws strongly upon the work and writings of WWDA and aligns its goals and strategic direction with theirs. WWDACT represents the 25,500 women and girls with disabilities in the ACT¹ and is committed to promoting and advancing the human rights and fundamental freedoms of ACT women with disabilities.

WWDACT works from a rights based framework that links gender and disability issues to a full range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. This rights based approach recognises that equal treatment, equal opportunity, and non-discrimination provide inclusive opportunities for women and girls with disabilities in society. It also seeks to create greater awareness among governments and other relevant institutions of their obligations to fulfill, respect, protect and promote human rights and to support and empower women with disabilities, both individually and collectively, to claim their rights.

Response to the proposed ACT Mental Health Care Consumers Charter

Women With Disabilities ACT welcomes the opportunity to participate in the consultation process.

1. What do you think of the Charter as it stands?

The Charter, as it stands, is easily understandable and is set out in a logical format. Women With Disabilities ACT believes that this Charter will play a pivotal role in the lives of women with disabilities in the ACT.

While the charter will be of benefit to all people in regards to mental health, it will be of particular relevance to women with disabilities in the territory because it will provide them with a navigation tool for self advocacy within the mental health system. Women with Disabilities ACT is currently working toward all women with disabilities within the ACT having the right tools, confidence and ability to self advocate in all forums in all ACT government and community sectors.

We know that there are direct correlations between an individual's self-esteem, self-actualisation, self-respect, self awareness and mental health. This belief is supported by fundamental research conducted by Women with Disabilities Australia (WWDA). If those qualities within an individual are poor, then the likelihood of that individual accessing any health system is severely diminished. Research from

¹ ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers 2003.

WWDA also shows that women with disabilities stated that mental health was a concern [Women with Disabilities Australia, 1999, Women with Disabilities Australia 2000, Salthouse, 2001].

WWDACT strongly supports this proposed Charter, and sees the benefits of increased consumer participation and recognition for rights of people with mental illness.

2. Do you think the language used is appropriate and understandable?

The Charter is clear and understandable, and written in language that is easily understandable. Women with Disabilities ACT endorses the holistic nature of the charter, and particularly the inclusion of needs related to gender and disability. This recognises the links to gender and disability of many of the issues associated with mental health.

4. If you could change the Charter what would you add, what would you modify or what would you remove?

Consumers also need to participate in the policy and design of the health service organisations they are involved with, and through the Charter it would be good for consumers to be encouraged to be involved in the decision-making processes when it comes to their mental-health.

5. How could the Charter best be promoted so mental health consumers know of their rights ? What might assist this process? And how do you think we could promote the Charter within ACT health and across different sectors of the community?

Social networking has become a practical communication instrument in today's society. Not only do people create individual online personas to stay in that chat with family and friends, but businesses, community organisations and governments from around the world use social networking to promote their 'brand' and provide their target audience with crucial information. Social networking has a wide ranging reach when a product or idea is required to be conveyed to a large number of people.

The promotion of the mental health charter can certainly benefit from the use of social networking. Twitter, MySpace and Facebook are the three main forms of social networking. Women with Disabilities ACT wishes to encourage the government to note the higher use of technologies and communication instruments, such as social networking, by many people with disability. These technologies are often in more accessible when compared to conventional forms of communication.

It will also be important to ensure that the information provided in any form of promotion of the Charter complies with the relevant technologies accessible standards (such as being accessible to screen readers and audio formatting.)

8. What opportunities currently exist to promote the Charter?

Many opportunities already exist for the promotion of the charter. Conventional media and marketing strategies like television, radio and newspapers are highly comprehensive and effective methods of promotion to people with disabilities.

9. Do you have any suggestions on how we might be able to support government and the non government sector to engage with the Charter and use it as a framework for a rights based approach in service development and provision and review?

Women with Disabilities ACT's membership is comprised of many women who are also part of the mental health care consumers network. Women with Disabilities ACT urges the government to place more emphasis upon the correlation between mental health and disability.

10. If you have any further comments relating to this Charter please note them in the space.

WWDACT looks forward to participating further in the consultation process, and the development of the ACT Mental Health Consumers Charter and other supporting policies and programs.