

Submission

No 8

**INQUIRY INTO HEALTH CARE COMPLAINTS AND COMPLAINTS
HANDLING IN NSW**

Organisation: South Eastern Sydney Local Health District

Name: Mr Terry Clout

Date Received: 7/02/2012

Mrs Leslie Williams MP
Chair, Committee on the Health
Care Complaints Commission
Parliament of NSW
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Mrs Williams

Inquiry into Health Care Complaints and Complaints Handling in New South Wales

Thank you for your invitation to the Chair of the Management Committee of the NSW Multicultural Health Communication Service (MHCS) to provide a submission to your current Inquiry. MHCS is funded by the NSW Ministry of Health to provide information and services to help health professionals communicate with non English speaking communities throughout NSW. MHCS is administered by South Eastern Sydney Local Health District (SESLHD). The MHCS website address is www.mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au.

The following forms MHCS's response to the above Inquiry:

Terms of Reference

- A. A comparative analysis of complaints lodged with the Health Care Complaints Commission by regional and metropolitan consumers, including the quantity and nature of complaints and consumer satisfaction.

Response A1

It would be very useful for the Commission to collect aggregate data for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities and analyse the usage and nature of complaints by CALD communities.

- B. Consumers' awareness and understanding of the complaint handling systems and processes available to them, both within the hospital system and in relation to external systems.

Response B1

New South Wales is Australia's most culturally diverse state. Almost one in three NSW residents was born overseas and around one in five speaks a language other than English at home.

In general, overseas-born residents have better health than Australian-born residents. This reflects the *healthy migrant effect*, whereby people in good health are more likely to meet eligibility criteria, and to be willing and economically able to migrate.

Migrants from many countries have a lower prevalence of health risk factors, such as obesity and alcohol consumption, than Australian-born people, but we also know that the relative health advantage that migrants have over Australian-born people tends to decrease with length of residence in Australia.

Due to cultural and language factors some CALD consumers may feel threatened by some government institutions, and may choose not to lodge a complaint against medical providers and health institutions.

MCHS recommends:

- That medical institutions and medical providers have on hand, language specific information to give CALD / all consumers prior to providing a service.
- Institutions and medical providers should use interpreters when performing / explaining a service to people of non-English speaking background. Family members should not be used.
- Consideration be given to the Commission making this a performance requirement which it will report on to the Community Relations Commission.

Response B2

In terms of CALD communities the Health Care Complaints Commission appears to have systems in place to promote access, e.g. resources translated in 20 languages and the Code of Conduct in ten languages are available on the Commission's and the NSW MCHultural Health Communication Service's websites. In addition accredited interpreters are also available if required. Consumers can also submit a written complaint online in English or in another language.

MHCS recommends that the Commission:

- Develops a communication plan to be targeted to all health facilities to ensure CALD communities are aware of the Commission's role and the service it offers. The plan should be communicated to staff and consumers of facilities, as well as the general CALD population, using key CALD organisations and community media.
- Translates the Commission's Privacy Policy in at least 20 languages, including those of communities that have recently arrived.

Yours sincerely



Terry Clout
Chief Executive

Date: 12/4/12