

Submission

No 3

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

Organisation: The Australian Council on Healthcare Standards

Name: Mr Brian Johnston

Date Received: 2/02/2012

2 February 2011

Ms Leslie Williams, MLA
Chair
Inquiry into Health Care Complaints Handling in NSW
Parliament of New South Wales
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Emailed via: chccc@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Ms Williams,

Inquiry into Health Care Complaints Handling in NSW

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the above Inquiry. As the national healthcare accreditation agency, ACHS does not deal directly with consumer / patient complaints. However, the ACHS supports the Inquiry's focus on the review of the consumer complaints process.

All consumer / patient complaints communicated to the ACHS are referred to the appropriate healthcare complaints authority in the relevant State.

ACHS accreditation standards and programs include specific criteria on the complaints management process. *The ACHS EQUiP5 Guide*¹ specifically deals with complaints within standard 2.1.

In response to Terms of Reference, point (a):

Criterion 2.1.4: Healthcare complaints and feedback are managed to ensure improvements to the systems of care.

Consumer / patient communication and feedback and consumer / patient involvement in the management of complaint processes form part of the elements within this criterion. Guidelines within this criterion include the following:

Each State / Territory in Australia has an independent body responsible for the receipt, assessment and investigation of healthcare-related complaints. While it is always desirable that complaints be resolved within the organisation concerned, consumers / patients should be made aware that other options for complaints management do exist; that they may lodge their complaint with the appropriate State / Territory body if they prefer; and that in the event that a complaint is not resolved by the organisation, or not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction, that they may still pursue the matter via those independent agencies, or via other agencies such as the ombudsman. Complaints about clinicians may also be lodged via the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency. The contact details for these bodies should be made available to the complainant.

In response to Terms of Reference, point (b):

The ACHS standards are accessible to the public, and assessment of complaints handling systems and processes are part of the assessment process.

The results of assessment of complaints, **Mandatory Criterion 2.1.3: Healthcare incidents, complaints and feedback are managed to ensure improvements to the systems of care**, was recently published in the ACHS *National Report on Health Services Accreditation Performance 2009-2010*². Survey findings demonstrate that organisations surveyed 2009-2010 have complaints systems in place that are well established. This was determined by the level of accreditation obtained meeting or exceeding a Marked Achievement (MA) rating.

ACHS welcomes information on the continuing work of the Inquiry and its recommendations and outcomes.

Yours sincerely,



BW Johnston
Chief Executive

¹ Australian Council on Healthcare Standards (ACHS). *The ACHS EQUIP5 Guide: Book 2 - Accreditation, Standards and Guidelines - Support and Corporate Functions*. Sydney, NSW; ACHS; 2010.

² Australian Council for Healthcare Standards (ACHS). *National Report on Health Services Accreditation Performance 2009-2010*. 4th edn. Sydney NSW; ACHS; 2011