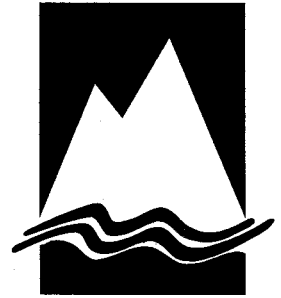




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**G R E A T E R
M U R R A Y
A R E A H E A L T H S E R V I C E**

5 November 2003

The Director
Standing Committee on Social Issues
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney 2000

Fax (02) 9230 ²2981

Dear Ms Burnswood

Inquiry Into The *INEBRIATES ACT 1912*

Thank you for providing the opportunity for the Greater Murray Area Health Service to make a submission to the Standing Committee on Social Issues in relation to their inquiry into the Inebriates Act 1912.

The Greater Murray Area Health Service has concerns in regard to the use of mental health facilities for inebriates under the Act as we believe a fundamental principle is that persons should not be placed in a hospital or mental health facility unless clinically warranted.

Within the Greater Murray Area Health Service there have been two occasions in recent years where the Act has been used to place people in our mental health inpatient unit. Rural hospitals have only small acute mental health units and the Health Service works to minimise the length of stay for inpatients and return them to the community for community-based care as soon as possible. These units are inappropriate for people with severe drug and alcohol problems and their presence can impact on the care of other people within the unit. The current mental health model of care focuses on community-based care. The inebriates Act by empowering courts to place affected people in mental health units is not in line with this model of care.

It is our understanding that this aspect of the Act was developed when there were a number of large-scale mental institutions designed for long stay patients who could accommodate the requirements of the Act. Given the change of direction in care models over the years the nature of mental health facilities has changed substantially and we therefore believe this aspect of the Act needs review.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely

Susan Weisser
Director Health Service Development