

HEALTH CONSUMERS' COUNCIL

COMMENTS ON SPECIALIST OUTPATIENT SERVICE ACCESS POLICY

JULY 2006

Background

The Health Consumers' Council is an independent community based organisation, representing the consumers' 'voice' in health policy, planning, research and service delivery. The Council advocates on behalf of consumers to government, doctors, other health professionals, hospitals and the wider health system. Funded by the Department of Health WA, the Council provides a state wide service.

The Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on this draft policy.

We note on **p.2** that there are no rights and responsibilities for hospitals – and we do not think a reference to Area Health Services is adequate – it appears to the Health Consumers' Council that administration at Area Health Service level may not be aware of 'happenings on the ground.'

We believe the policy puts too much emphasis on the obligations of the patient.

Equally the hospital should have the responsibility to ensure that appointments are not cancelled on the day.

The hospital should have responsibility to have specialist cover for outpatient appointments.

The hospital should ensure that all medical specialist leave arrangements are organised in advance with proper notification to patients, except in the case of an emergency.

p.5 last para 2nd sentence

The patient will be informed in writing of their placement on the appointment list etc etc

Draft brochure

The brochure is not written in a friendly helpful manner, it lacks empathy and a user friendly tone.

The brochure does make reference to the cancellation of outpatient clinics.

It would be greatly improved if

Our commitment included clause:

We will make every attempt to advise you in advance of the cancellation of any outpatient clinic.

p.29

As you can appreciate the cancellation of pre-admission clinic appointments and booked operations is highly inconvenient for all involved. This happens when patients fail to attend appointments and leads to delays for many patients. We would appreciate your assistance in ensuring that if you are unable to attend your appointment or you do not require your operation please phone Outpatient Direct, or contact the Elective Surgery Co-ordinator.

Regrettably, the demands on our health system require that any patient who declines two offers of clinic appointment/or two offers of an operation date or fails to respond may have to be removed from the elective surgery waiting list.