We value the initiative of putting together National Recovery Principles. Furthermore, we are interested to see more endorsement and implementation of the National Recovery Principles across all forms of Mental Health Services delivery in Australia, and in the ACT in particular.

We want to highlight our concern in the use of measurable/unmeasurable words such as ability, can, meaningful, satisfying and positive – as these words are open to social expectation and norm and often conflict with the individual’s understanding and expectation. Therefore there is a need to clarify the words further when using words such as these.

Our proposed change for the introductory paragraphs are:

**Remove the word ‘expect’**
Reason: The word ‘expect’ reduces the emphasis on the statement that Australians have a right to a high standard of health care:

Australians have a right to expect a high standard of health care.

**Replace the words ‘both mental illness and physical illness’ with ‘any illness’.**
Reason: The category promotes separation between physical and mental illness which contradicts the concept of recovery where both are interconnected. We prefer the term ‘any illness’ to indicate that illness represents the whole person including mental and physical aspects.

This principle applies to any illness.

**Replace the words ‘care’ with ‘service’.**
Reason: The word ‘services’ is preferred over ‘care’ because care is only one type of service where the word ‘service’ provides broader coverage.

The principles of recovery oriented practice underpin all forms of mental health service.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principles</th>
<th>Suggested Change(s)</th>
<th>Rationale for Change</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Individual uniqueness</td>
<td>a. Recognises that recovery is not necessarily about cure but is about living a life that is meaningful and satisfying to the individual. b. Accepts that the recovery journey and outcomes are personal and unique for each individual and go beyond an exclusive health focus to include an emphasis on social inclusion and quality of life. c. Acknowledges that the individual recovery journey is not equal to stability, and fluctuation is acceptable and relapsing is part of the journey. d. Empowers individuals to exercise responsibility in self-managing illnesses to the maximum extent possible.</td>
<td>a. Insert the words ‘to the individual’ to emphasise that the meaningful and satisfying life is measured according to the individual instead of based on societal norms or other people’s expectations. b. Insert the word ‘journey’ to balance that the focus of recovery is not always on the outcomes but also the process. Replace the word ‘person’ with ‘individual’ for consistency purpose. c. Insert the whole sentence to highlight that recovery is a process, therefore fluctuation is acceptable and stability is not a solely target. Relapsing is part of the recovery. d. This is to highlight and individual’s self responsibility in partnership with professionals, carers and personal supporters. The phrasing attempts to take away what could be regarded as a ‘victim’ mentality to one of proactively seeking to stay as well as possible.</td>
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2. Real choices

a. Recovery is a personal choice.

b. Supports individuals to make their own choices about how they want to lead their lives and pursue their recovery strategy. It is important to acknowledge that choices need to be meaningful and explored to the maximum possible extent. Care needs to be exercised that strategies do not disempower individuals.

a. Insert the whole sentence which highlights individual’s choice over recovery and to ensure that it is not up to the provider to determine when a person is ready to make progress—it is up to the person in partnership with providers.

And if the person is ready to seek support in their recovery journey, the service should be available without pre-judging the individual's appearance of wellness.

'The service providers should avoid rewarding people in developing attitude to be more pathetic. I found that the more pathetic you are, the easier you will get access to the service. And the more you seem to appear well, the harder you can access the service.' Consumer

b. Replace the word ‘person’ with ‘individual’ for consistency purpose.

Remove the word ‘empowers’ and replace it with ‘Care needs to be exercised that strategies do not disempower individuals.'

'I feel that empowerment comes from inside me. I don’t need someone to empower me. What I do need is no one trying to disempower me, which is often done to me by health experts.' Consumer

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| **c.** | Supports individuals to build on their strengths and take as much responsibility for their lives as they prefer at any given time. | Insert ‘their recovery strategy’ to make a clearer statement that the real choices include individual’s choice about medication and other treatment for their recovery journey.  

‘In the recovery scenario, medications are one of many options and choices for reducing symptoms. Others include the recovery skills, strategies and techniques listed above along with treatments that address health-related issues. Though medications are certainly a choice, we believe that medication compliance as the only strategy to control symptoms is not appropriate.’

Replace the word ‘creatively’ with ‘maximum possible extent’ to provide more clarification and definition. |
| **d.** | Acknowledge that there is a trade off between duty of care and support for people to take positive risks and make the most of new opportunities. | The word ‘can’ opens a room for external interpretation of what the individual is able or not able to do. ‘Prefer’ gives more subjectivity and power to the individual to make decisions for him or herself. |
| **d.** | Replace the word ‘balance’ with ‘trade off’ because duty of care and support for people to take positive risks can conflict at times. It is important to state that duty of care and support for people does not work hand-in-hand at all times, and people need to make decisions about which one is more applicable on in each individual case. |   |

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3. Attitudes and Rights

<table>
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<tr>
<th>a.</th>
<th>Involves listening to, learning from and responding to the individual, their relatives and others about what is important to the individual’s recovery journey when it is appropriate.</th>
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<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>Promotes and protects people’s rights.</td>
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<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>Supports people to maintain and develop meaningful personal, social, recreational, and/or occupational and vocational activities which enhance mental wellbeing.</td>
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4. Dignity and Respect

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Involves sensitivity and respect for each individual’s own beliefs, values and culture.</th>
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This recognises that each individual brings with them their history, their beliefs, their values and their cultural background.

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Sensitivity to an individual's beliefs, albeit religious or perceptions of what is right for their recovery journey is crucial to maintaining mental well being and encouraging a journey of recovery.

| 5. Partnership and Communication | a. Acknowledges each person is an expert on their own life and that recovery involves working in partnership with individuals and their nominated personal supporters, which may for example include friends, clergy or relatives and carers, to offer support in a way that is most meaningful to them. | a. We prefer ‘nominated/personal supporters’ instead of ‘relatives and carers’ to highlight individuals’ capacity in identifying people and services that will be valuable in their recovery journey.  

‘I don’t relate to the language of having a family or a carer. I live alone with no relatives in Canberra. I find personal supporters more meaningful. In the last ten years my help has come more from what I may relate to as friends or personal supporters.’ Consumer  

We also prefer ‘offer’ than ‘provide’ because it is less patronising. |
| b. Values the importance of sharing appropriate information and the need to communicate clearly with individuals and their nominated personal supporters. | b. Gives clarity to who the mental health practice should share information with and emphasise the importance of clear communication with individuals and their nominated supporters, which might be different to that of relatives or carers. |
| c. Involves working in positive and respectful ways with individuals and their nominated personal supporters to help them realise their own hopes, goals and aspirations. | c. Replace the word ‘realistic’ with ‘respectful’ so as to emphasise the need to maintain the dignity of each individual.  

The word ‘realistic’ is open to too many interpretations and there is concern that it may emphasise what could be seen as an unequal relationship between mental health |
practitioners and individuals rather than creating a sense of partnership where both parties are working towards a goal of achieving the individual’s hopes, goals and aspirations as they relate to their recovery journey.

| 6. Evaluating Recovery | Ensures and enables evaluation of recovery at several levels –  
  - individuals and carers and/or nominated personal supporters can track the progress of the individual’s recovery journey;  
  - services are seen to use the individual’s experiences of services to inform quality improvement activities;  
  - The mental health system reports on key outcomes that indicate recovery including (but not limited to) housing, engagement in the community, social inclusion and education as well as health and well being measures. |
  Replace the word ‘their own progress’ with ‘the progress of the individual’s recovery journey’ to provide more clarity on who ‘they’ are. The word ‘services’ is preferred over ‘care’ because care is only one type of service and the word ‘services’ provides broader coverage.  
  We acknowledge that employment may play great role for some individual’s recovery journey. However, the word employment can be easily translated into full-time paid work which is not suitable for some people. So instead of ‘employment’, we prefer ‘engagement in the community and social inclusion’.
  ‘Returning to paid employment is not a part of my recovery journey. I have always found being in the workplace to be more damaging than helpful.’ Consumer |

Please forward comments to:  
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