



Health Care Consumers' Association ACT INC
100 Maitland Street, HACKETT ACT 2602
Phone: 02 6230 7800 Fax: 02 6230 7833
Email: adminofficer@hcca.org.au
ABN: 59 698 548 902
hcca.org.au | hcca-act.blogspot.com |
facebook.com/HCCA.ACT | [@HealthCanberra](https://twitter.com/HealthCanberra)

RE: ACT Health Electrical Safety Policy and Procedure

The Health Care Consumers' Association (HCCA) is a health promotion organisation which provides a voice for consumers on local health issues and also provides opportunities for health care consumers in the ACT to participate in all levels of health service planning, policy development and decision making. HCCA involves consumers through consumer representation, consultations, community forums, and information sessions about health services and conducts training for consumers in health rights and navigating the health system.

HCCA welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the **ACT Health Electrical Safety Policy and Procedure for Safety with using Electrical Equipment and Power Cords – General.**

The community and consumers expect and assume that legislative and regulatory requirements for electrical safety are met by ACT Health as an underpinning for safe healthcare environments. The implementation of this policy and procedure will help ensure the management of potential and real risks of harm or injury in relation to electrical equipment across ACT Health. We are pleased to see that the community, including volunteers and consumers are covered in the scope of this policy document. It would be great to also see carers included in the list of stakeholders.

Policy - Consumer's personal electrical items

We would anticipate that the most common devices consumers would bring with them to hospital would be electrical items such as mobile phones, other portable communication devices, hairdryers, shavers, electric toothbrushes, as well as some medical devices such as CPAP machines and nebulisers. It is not clear in the policy as to whether these items fall within the policy scope. We note that the procedure (on p2) specifically states that it does not cover electrical equipment (including patient and privately owned equipment) used in the patient environment. Clarity around this issue needs to be addressed.

If personal electrical items are within the scope of the policy, we are concerned about the communication and application of the statement in the Electrical Safety Policy (under *Roles and Responsibilities*, p2) that:

“It is the responsibility of individual staff, as well as contractors, students, volunteers, consumers/patients and suppliers to ensure that all personal electrical items have been tested and tagged/labelled prior to bringing the items onto ACT Health premises.”

We think this information needs to be communicated to consumers, preferably through [The Canberra Hospital Inpatient Guide](#). In addition, either in the Inpatient Guide, or referred to in the Inpatient Guide – consumers need information about how testing, tagging and labelling for consumer items is to be carried out i.e. is this something that ACT Health expects consumers to have carried out prior to a planned hospital admission? How are they to go about this and is the process for doing so reasonably achievable? Or can consumers get this testing done on an as-needs basis on-site? If this is the case, we do not see this is realistic.

Procedure for Safety with using Electrical Equipment and Power Cords – General (excluding Medical Equipment)

We note that the procedure (on p2) specifically states that it does not cover electrical equipment (including patient and privately owned equipment) used in the patient environment. However, depending on the policy scope, as outlined above, there are a number of statements from pages 3 & 4 of the procedure, relating to power boards, fire alarms, inspection, testing and tagging, which may have an impact on consumers and as such needs to be communicated.

Information for Consumers about Electrical Safety in ACT Health Sites

In considering this policy and procedure, we have looked at some examples from other healthcare organisations. For example, Westmead Children’s Hospital has a section on Patient-owned Electrical Equipment (p2) in their [Electrical Safety at CHW Procedure](#), while Metro South Health in QLD have a section on mobile phones and electrical devices (p11) in their [Patient Information Guide](#).

Current information in The Canberra Hospital Inpatient Guide mentions the use mobile phones and personal CPAP machines. Information provided to consumers about Electrical Safety will depend on how ACT Health considers the Electrical Safety policy and procedure to apply.

We are happy to discuss our submission further. Please contact Kathryn Briant via email: kathrynbriant@hcca.org.au.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Darlene Cox". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and a long, sweeping tail.

Darlene Cox
Executive Director
Health Care Consumers' Association

Date: 1 April 2016