

Know your rights and where to get support

While some carers and families have positive experiences with hospitals, others describe this as being one of the most frustrating, intimidating and powerless experiences they have ever encountered.

It's very important to know your rights. There is a Patient Charter of Rights for public and private patients respectively, which outlines patient rights and responsibilities.

If you feel these rights have been disregarded, or you experience ultimatums when you do not agree with what hospital staff feel is the best thing for the patient, contact the:

- ▣ social work department;
- ▣ patient liaison officer or complaints coordinator;
- ▣ hospital management

Generally the social worker is your initial contact point and can speak up on your behalf, whilst obtaining more information for you about the situation.

Patient liaison officers or complaints coordinators respond to unresolved issues or complaints and can act as a mediator between the hospital and the family - they can speak up on behalf of families when appropriate.

Alternatively you may contact an external organisation like [Office of the Public Advocate \(OPA\)](#). OPA provides an advice line which allows you to speak confidentially with an advocate - phone 9278 7300. As a last resort you may choose to seek legal advice.

Hospitals are not yet as carer-friendly as we would like them to be. However don't be afraid to be seen and heard as progress is made each time a carer gives feedback.

The following messages are from carers who have spoken up.

- ▣ Don't be afraid of the system.
- ▣ Be confident and work in partnership with staff.
- ▣ You know your family member best.

Further information:

- ▣ [Public Hospital Patients' Charter](#)
- ▣ [Private Patients' Hospital Charter](#)
- ▣ [The Office of Health Review](#) - phone 9323 0600 or 1800 813 583
- ▣ [Office of the Public Advocate \(OPA\)](#) - phone: 9278 7300 or 1800 807 437

Contact the [Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre](#) on 1800 242 636* to request the above information sheet be sent to you - or to find out about other information sheets in this series.

*Free call except from mobile phones. Mobile calls at mobile rates.

We do our best to keep these links up to date, but the internet changes all the time. If you can no longer access any of the above resources, please go to our [Internet Troubleshooting Guide](#), or email us at website@carersvic.org.au