

## WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN I CALL THE COUNCIL?

When you call the Council of Official Visitors, you'll be asked for your name and contact number so that an Official Visitor can call and arrange a suitable time to visit – usually within two working days.

You may be able to receive some assistance by telephone, and a same day visit if the matter is urgent.

The Official Visitor may need to speak to your treating team or other staff and may access your medical records – unless you deny this access.

You may receive help in having the Mental Health Review Board review your case and may also be referred to specialist help such as the Mental Health Law Centre.

If the Council is not able to assist you we will refer you onto the most appropriate agency or service.

An Official Visitor may also make the Chief Psychiatrist or the Minister for Health aware of a situation, if there is cause for concern.

## WHERE CAN YOU CONTACT THE COUNCIL?

You can contact the Council of Official Visitors on: 1800 999 057 (free call).

The office is attended from 8.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday. After these hours and on weekends you can leave a message on the answering machine and it will be answered as soon as possible, usually within 24 hours.

Office telephone: (08) 9226 3266

Office fax: (08) 9226 3977

Visit our web site [www.coov.org](http://www.coov.org) or Email: [info@coov.org](mailto:info@coov.org)

You can also contact the Council by writing to (no postage required):

Reply Paid 61349

Council of Official Visitors

1/18 Harvest Terrace (corner Hay Street)

WEST PERTH WA 6005

The Council can arrange for a interpreter if necessary.

## OTHER HELPFUL CONTACTS

Mental Health Review Board

For a review of your involuntary status – Ph: (08) 9219 3162

Mental Health Law Centre

For legal advice and representation at Mental Health Review Board hearings – Ph: (08) 9328 8266 or Freecall: 1800 620 285

Office of Chief Psychiatrist

Responsible for the medical care and welfare of all involuntary patients, and monitoring of standards of mental health care in Western Australia – Ph: (08) 9222 4462

Office of Health Review

For investigations of complaints about public and private health services – Ph: (08) 9323 0600 or Freecall: 1800 813 583

Health Consumers' Council

For advocacy, information and advice regarding health services – Ph: (08) 9221 3422 or Country Freecall: 1800 620 780

Artwork produced through Creative Expression Unit at Graylands Hospital.

Main body paintings by Craig Wood.

Border painting by Roch Dzielwowski-Gintowt.

October 2005

# Council of Official Visitors



**Mental health consumers have rights too!**

The Council of Official Visitors makes an annual report to the Minister for Health which presents an overview of its activities during the year and raises matters of concern.

This report is tabled in Parliament.

## WHAT IS THE COUNCIL OF OFFICIAL VISITORS?

The Council of Official Visitors is an **independent agency** established under the *Mental Health Act 1996* to ensure **people** with a mental illness **are aware of their rights** and that these rights are respected.

Official Visitors are **people from the community** who have an **understanding of mental illness** and the problems people with a mental illness and their carers face. They are appointed by the Minister for Health and work on a casual basis.

**Official Visitors can hear complaints, make enquiries and act upon them to find a satisfactory resolution.**

Official Visitors inspect authorised hospitals and licensed private psychiatric hostels to ensure they are kept in a safe and suitable condition.

## WHO CAN THE COUNCIL OF OFFICIAL VISITORS HELP?

*The Council of Official Visitors can help if you are:*

- ▶ receiving treatment involuntarily in hospital
- ▶ a mentally impaired defendant who is in an authorised hospital
- ▶ on a Community Treatment Order
- ▶ living in a licensed private psychiatric hostel or group home.

*A family member or friend can also contact the Council or request a visit on your behalf.*

*The Council is not able to assist you if you are a voluntary patient, however we will refer you onto someone who can.*

## HOW CAN THE COUNCIL HELP?

*Members of the Council of Official Visitors can:*

- ▶ visit you if requested
- ▶ give advice and assistance by telephone
- ▶ hear, enquire into and attempt to resolve complaints about the service you have received
- ▶ help you to make applications to the Mental Health Review Board
- ▶ provide support for you at your Mental Health Review Board hearing
- ▶ inspect authorised hospitals at least once a month and licensed psychiatric hostels as directed by the Health Minister (usually every two months).

## YOUR RIGHTS IN RELATION TO THE COUNCIL

*You can:*

- ▶ ring the Council to make a complaint or request a visit
- ▶ be seen by an Official Visitor when they are visiting the premises at which you are staying
- ▶ have an Official Visitor see your medical records
- ▶ refuse to see an Official Visitor
- ▶ refuse to allow an Official Visitor to see your medical records.