

# National Mental Health Consumer & Carer Forum – Style Guide

## Font and Layout

The National Mental Health Consumer Carer Forum (NMHCCF) uses 11 point Arial as its default font.

Ensure text is left aligned.

## Person

The Forum prefers use of the following terms:  
'The NMHCCF'

'National Mental Health Consumer & Carer Forum' - written in full.

## Spelling

Adopt Australian English spelling unless it is an official title or quoted text.

## Acronyms, abbreviations, and Contractions

Acronyms should not be used in the body of the text without first spelling out the full name/title. Always write in full when writing for the web. Do not use contractions in formal text.

It is - **not** it's      do not - **not** don't

Use alternatives for i.e. and e.g. in text.

**i.e.** - that is      **e.g.** - or example

If **i.e.** or **e.g.** must be used, be consistent in either.

## Apostrophes

Apostrophes are used to denote possession—they are never used to - denote plurals.

Within the NMHCCF's policies...

The committees responded quickly...

The Government and its decisions...

## Referring to Consumers and Carers

Never use 'sufferers', 'suffers from', or 'mentally ill'.

Always write of the consumer/s first, illness second and never in third person:

Use 'people with a mental illness' or 'a person with mental illness' **not** 'the mentally ill' or 'schizophrenic consumers'.

Keep references to carers and consumers as generic as possible:

Use 'consumers and carers' or 'mental health consumers/carers' or 'consumer/families' or 'carers and the person they care for' not 'consumers and their families' or 'consumers and their loved one'.

## Plain English

Consider your audience. Use familiar, everyday words. Try to strike a balance between precision and simplicity. Short is good—in words and sentences. Aim for sentences of around 15-25 words. Be ruthless in eliminating unnecessary words.

Keep sentence construction simple. Use 'explain' **not** 'provide an explanation'.

Avoid double negatives, such as 'not unlikely'.

Use the 'active voice':

'Forum members attended the launch' not 'the launch was attended by Forum members'.

Use the positive rather than the negative.

Be consistent in tense.

## Avoid jargon. Consider the audience beyond the mental health sector.

## Government branding

Use - states / territories **not** - States / Territories unless referring to a particular State.

When referring to a government department, write the name in full followed by the acronym in brackets. Use the acronym thereafter:

The Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA).

## Punctuation

### Spacing

Use 1 point spacing in all documents.

Use a non-breaking space to prevent breaking titles, names, or dates across lines.

Ctrl + Shift + Space bar

### Bullet points

Use minimal capitalisation when using bullet points.

Only use a full stop after the last bullet point unless each bullet point is a complete sentence. Do not close the dot points with semi colons and do not use 'and' before the last bullet point.

Use 6 point spacing for bullet points.

### Full stops and commas

Do not use full stops or commas in:

titles, names, or post-nominal

Dr AO BSc The Hon

### Address blocks, salutation

Dr James Miller  
Executive Director  
PO Box XYZ  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

### Acronyms, abbreviations, and contractions

NMHCCF – MHCA - Mr - NSW

### Quotation marks

Use '**single**' quotation marks to enclose direct quotations, whether sentence fragments or one or more sentences.

Use "**double**" quotation marks for a quote within a quote. A full stop comes after the quote mark, unless more than one full sentence is quoted.

### Dashes (em rule, en rule, hyphen)

**em rule** [Ctrl/Alt and the – key (far right of keyboard in number keypad, above the long + key)]

A long dash – signifies an abrupt change or explanation.



## en rule [Ctrl and – key]

A shorter dash is used as a linking device, such as between dates or page numbers.

Hyphens are a shorter dash used in words such as co-location or pre-eminent.

## Paragraphs

Paragraphs should not start with an indent in text: The National Mental Health Consumer & Carer Forum...**not**

The National Mental Health Consumer & Carer ...

10 point spacing should be used for paragraph breaks.

## Headings

Headings should be bold and one size (one point) larger than the general font.

## Dates

1980s (no apostrophe)

'From 1987 to 1995' not '1987-1995'

15 December 2009

Appears at the top of a letter not after a signature block.

## Periods of years:

1963-64            2003-2004

## Capitals and lower case

Use minimal capitalisation in headings, program names, or titles.

Use sentence case for headings—first letter capital then all lower case.

Use capitals for:

the formal names of departments, State and Territory when they are nouns and refer to jurisdictions that make up the Commonwealth of Australia - government when it refers to the Government of a state or country

a specific officeholder, such as the Minister for Mental Health.

Use lower case for:

generic references to states or federal as adjectives  
plural or generic references to governments generic  
reference to people, bodies, or entities.

## Legislation

When referring to legislation, use the following conventions:

The first reference to an Act in a document should give the full title in italics (*Mental Health Act 2000*). Subsequent references can be to a shortened title in normal type (Mental Health Act). Bills and regulations are shown in normal case, not italics. A reference to a section number should be written as s 5 or 2 5(2) (d)— **not** section 5, or 2.5 or s5. It should not be italicised. Legislation is made by the parliament, not the government.

## Numbers

Numbers should be written in full form one to nine, and figures used from 10 onwards. This includes the use of billion, million, and so on:

'\$10 billion was spent...' not '\$10billion', '\$10B', '\$10bn' or '\$10b'.

When opening a sentence, express a number in words: Fifteen people work at the Forum office.

When two numbers are consecutive, write one as a word and one as a numeral:

There are six 2-year projects.

Use numerals:

in tables  
as a symbol of measurement (currency, time, distance, and so on) in related series of numbers provided for comparison.

## Symbols

Use the '%' symbol not 'per cent'.

***This style guide has been developed by the NMHCCF, drawing on various sources including the MHCA Style Guide.***

## Referencing

Use APA referencing:

Use footnotes **not** in text referencing.

Author, A., & Author, B. (year). *Title of book* (edition if not first). City: Publisher.

<sup>1</sup> SANE Australia (2006). *Research Bulletin 4: Stigma and Mental Illness*. Melbourne, Victoria: SANE Australia. <sup>2</sup> Smith, J. (2009). *Mental Health: We Care* (5<sup>th</sup> ed., pp 9-12). Toowoomba, Queensland: Smith.

Capitalise only the first letter of the first word of a book title and any proper nouns. The first letter of the subtitle (if any) is capitalised also.

A footnote reference comes after the full stop, not before:

...report carried out in 2000.<sup>1</sup>

Use 'Ibid' in footnotes when the reference is the same as the one immediately before:

<sup>1</sup> NMHCCF. (2006). Ibid; page 63.

Use 'Op. cit.' when the reference has already been cited elsewhere in the document:

<sup>1</sup> Moore, J. (2005). Op. cit.; page 205

## Common errors

Ensure both the subject and its verb are either singular or plural, depending on whether the meaning relates to a group as a whole or individuals within it:

people are aware

the woman was aware

The number of people has fallen since...

A number of people are to attend.

Treat collective nouns such as government and committee as singular:

The government has decided...

Use **they** instead of **he/she** as a gender-neutral pronoun.