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Rudi Lammers & Katherine Campbell
Watchhouse Review Team
GPO Box 401
Canberra City ACT 2601

Dear Sir or Madam

RE. Review of ACT Policing's Watchhouse Operations.

I refer to your letter dated 22 February 2007 concerning the above Review. As a community interested group we provide the following as our submission for your consideration. Also, should there be a need to elaborate further on our submission we would be more than willing to meet with the Team.

The People with Disabilities organisation is a peak consumer voice for people with disabilities in Canberra. And, whilst we have identified a number of issues in our submission, we also strongly believe there are issues associated with people with disabilities that affect the health of this group together with the way they are handled prior to arrival in the watch house that also needs to be understood and addressed. In addition to the following it is extremely important that training for all officers on the many types of disability, its impact on an individual and how it may affect people or be perceived by others must be incorporated in mainstream officer training.

In regard to the areas identified in your correspondence and attachments we submit the following:

I. Physical conditions and safety of the Watch house environment.

- The built environment of the Watch house needs to comply with the Australian Standard and the Building Code that determines physical access and hand rail locations and heights, light switch, bed, sink and toilet heights, turning circles etc for the use of wheelchairs and mobility aids in the cells.
- Falls prevention.

2. Standards of care and control of persons in custody in the Watch house,

and how these are implemented.

- People with communication or learning disabilities who would have considerable difficulty understanding charges or direction.
Those who rely on others to advocate for them.
Intellectual disabilities being miss perceived as a mental health problem.
- Inappropriate physical handling of individuals with disabilities in such a way that may cause injuries.
- Transportation of people in wheelchairs.

3. Extent to which the needs of special groups are met.

- Police training to incorporate disability issues and handling.
- Material presented to people with visual disabilities in alternative formats e.g. Braille or audio etc.
- Access to advocates, other support and care agencies.
- Prescribed medications being withdrawn because they may be perceived as illicit drugs e.g. valium and bachlofen for spasm management, anti-depressant that may put the individual at risk if not allowed to be administered.

- Injuries being treated prior to lock-up.

4. **Management of Watch house operations and complaints.**

- Occupational health and safety considerations for the detaining officers and how they lift or transfer detainees.
- Close supervision of this group of individuals during their containment.
- Development of special programs to identify and manage at risk individuals with disabilities.
- Understanding of an individual's disability and its impact on how they act or re-act.

We trust this assists with the Review and provides an opportunity to develop a range of outcomes that enables improved procedure for the care and management of people with disabilities that come into Watch house operations. It is our view not to identify or describe any practice as being the best practice, because it strongly suggests it cannot be improved upon.

Yours sincerely

Kylie Mahar (Executive Officer, People With Disabilities ACT)

28 March 2007