

## Locking of Patients' Bedrooms in Psychiatric Inpatient Facilities

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**Functional Sub group** Clinical/ Patient Services - Mental Health

**Summary** The locking of patients' bedrooms in psychiatric inpatient facilities is not to be actively promoted or practised unnecessarily.

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**Applies to** Area Health Services/Chief Executive Governed Statutory Health Corporation, Board Governed Statutory Health Corporations, Affiliated Health Organisations - Non Declared, Community Health Centres, Divisions of General Practice, Government Medical Officers, NSW Dept of Health, Private Hospitals and Day Procedure Centres, Public Health Units, Public Hospitals

**Distributed to** Public Health System, Community Health Centres, Divisions of General Practice, Government Medical Officers, Health Professional Associations and Related Organisations, NSW Department of Health, Public Health Units, Public Hospitals, Private Hospitals and Day Procedure Centres

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### Director-General

This Policy Directive may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Compliance with this directive is **mandatory** for NSW Health and is a condition of subsidy for public health organisations.

## CIRCULAR

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### THE LOCKING OF PATIENTS' BEDROOMS IN PSYCHIATRIC IN-PATIENT FACILITIES

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

This document provides guidelines for staff in psychiatric in-patient facilities in respect of the practice of locking patients' bedrooms. The policy has been developed following review of current practices and procedures in mental health services in NSW.

#### 2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Section 4 (2) (b) of the NSW Mental Health Act 1990 states that:

*"in providing for the care and treatment of persons who are mentally ill or who are mentally disordered, any restriction on the liberty of patients and other persons who are mentally ill or mentally disordered and any interference with their rights, dignity and self-respect are kept to the minimum necessary in the circumstances."*

Given this statement from the Mental Health Act the locking of patients' bedrooms in psychiatric in-patient facilities is **not** to be actively promoted or practised unnecessarily. At all times the rights, dignity and self-respect of patients must be observed and respected.

#### 3. POLICY GUIDELINES

The locking of patients' bedrooms in psychiatric in-patient facilities is not to be actively promoted and may only be practised in line with these guidelines. The following circumstances may require the need for patients' bedrooms to be locked:

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Distributed in accordance with circular list(s):

A 74    B            C 73    D            E 8  
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- < for the encouragement of socialisation and as part of a defined treatment program;
- < for the protection of patients' possessions;
- < for the privacy of patients who are resting or unwell;
- < for security reasons;
- < for patient safety reasons;

In circumstances where patients' bedrooms are locked patients **must** be permitted access to their rooms and possessions as needed and with the appropriate supervision as required.

If bedrooms are regularly locked for defined periods of time or are locked for a specific reason in line with the above all patients **must** be adequately informed of this and provided with information about how they can access their belongings as necessary.

The locking of patients' bedrooms is **not** to be used as a punishment or as a deliberate infringement of a patient's rights.

J Wyn Owen  
**Director-General**