

To whom it may concern,

RE: Senate Community Affairs Committee inquiry into funding and administration of mental health services

I would like to submit to the enquiry a document of my experience as a patient of the mental health system over the past 15 years.

I was raised in a disjointed family environment, where alcohol and emotional abuse was commonplace. In plain terms, that kind of environment is like a slow, subtle torture, but not uncommon in our society. I slowly lost my grip on reality, until as a teen I started to find myself 'waking up' in familiar places without any idea how I might have gotten there. I was so very confused, and I left home at 15 to get away from the root of the problem.

The next two years saw me scooped up by the system - I was taken into foster care, booked in to see a psychiatrist at Qld Health, and 24 hr later admitted to the Royal Brisbane Hospital, where I was put on anti-depressant medication, and sent back out a week later, more confused than before. I had two more admissions - to the Prince Charles Hospital - in that time, and no-one seemed to be any closer to helping me; in fact for a period at 16 I was wrongly prescribed anti psychotic medication, I believe at least in part because the system and the people working in it are so stretched that a bandaid is better than nothing at all.

I spent the following years trying to get on and be normal, but some days it was just impossible to leave the house, I couldn't maintain anything, from the cleanliness of my home, to a job or study, to the few friendships I had, and even saying hello to someone in the street was an indescribably impossible feat. I tried every day to 'get over' whatever it was that was causing so much pain. I saw a total of 8 private practitioners within ten years, all of whom ended up shrugging their shoulders and saying "I just don't know what to do", leaving me in an even more more isolated place than before

I gave up looking for help and continued getting on with things. In 2009 I had a nervous breakdown. I wasn't sure I'd make it through, and I had the very real thought that, "this might be it, maybe this is actually where it ends."

Following my breakdown, my choices were narrowed to finding help or ending my life.

Only due to the medicare scheme have I found the support I need. It has taken me 18 months working with a practitioner to make some sense of my experiences, and live a normal life. I have needed, and utilised all 18 sessions that are available per calendar year. If this flexible support had not been available to me, or had been offered and then restricted, I don't know where I would go, where I might be now, or if I could even stick it out.

Please. There needs to be decent services for those us who sit outside of the already strained hospital system. It's so important.

Sincerely,