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The Secretary
Committee Inquiry into the Support of Illicit Drug Use on Families
House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Thank you for setting up the Federal Parliamentary Inquiry into the impact of illicit drug use on families.

I am the widowed mother of 11 children. One of my sons died as a result of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome in 1970 and one of my daughters was born deaf. Among my nine daughters and one son there are 9 university degrees, two in progress, several diplomas, and numerous other tertiary qualifications.

My youngest daughter (28) is a heroin addict. Only those who have had close contact with drug addiction can begin to understand the trauma that drug addiction inflicts upon families. "Good" advice abounds, mostly from those who have never had any contact with drug addiction at all. Their advice seems to stem from what they have gained from magazine articles, television and shock jock radio announcers.

Like most families, our initial reaction to the knowledge that our daughter/sister was a heroin user was panic. With no one to turn to for advice we made many mistakes.

I therefore wish to address the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry.

Yours faithfully



Shirley Carroll

to my daughter who continues to struggle with her addiction. How few people ever draw the corollary between giving up an illicit drug (heroin) and giving up a legal drug, e.g. nicotine or alcohol.

Term of Reference (3)

Ways to strengthen families who are coping with a member(s) using illicit drugs.

I urge the Committee to look at ways to strengthen the support systems for families who are struggling with this problem every day. I strongly believe that many more drug users could be encouraged to lead productive, drug-free lives, if there was more support, less vitriol, more love, less accusations of worthlessness, and their families were helped to continue to love and care for them. To do this families need to have good unbiased information, and help to develop skills to cope with the person/s addiction. Ignorance is our greatest enemy in this battle.

I envisage information being freely disseminated and freely accessible to people who are in a position to influence public responses to drug addiction. This is a major problem for young people and it is not going to go away soon. Do we wish to condemn as '*trash*' a large proportion of our younger generation of well-educated, articulate and potentially valuable citizens? Too many people in these positions of influence, e.g. teachers, clergymen/women, politicians, police, doctors, radio and TV personalities speak from a position of dangerous ignorance, bigotry and bias. Anyone who has ever attended a support group of parents and family members of a drug user would find that their attitude would very soon undergo enormous changes.

This is a major social and political issue for the 21st century. I urge you to respond with compassion and help fight this insidious scourge.