

7 March 2007

Secretary of the Committee  
Inquiry into the support of illicit drug use on families  
House of Representatives  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Secretary

Below please find our submission in response to the Federal Parliamentary Inquiry into the impact of illicit drug use on families.

We are the parents of a 26 year old son, [REDACTED] who has been a regular drug user since the age of 14. His most recent drug use has been heroin, cocaine, ice and Serepax. He has been in and out of custodial care over the last 10 years. He is currently incarcerated in the psychiatric section of MRRC at Silverwater Correctional Centre in Sydney, on remand. Currently he is on methadone and anti psychotic medication after a period of drug induced psychosis arising from the use of ice.

Response to terms of reference:

**Term of Reference 1**

a. Financial

We have to support our son when he is not in custody, such as paying the methadone clinic and providing him with clothes.

Initially we paid legal fees.

He has a 4 year old son, living with the other grandparents under Family Court order. We contribute to our grandson's expenses such as day care and legal costs.

Another expense is the cost of regular family therapy to maintain our sanity.

b. Social

The shame experienced by us having a child incarcerated due to drug and mental health problems. We often feel isolated and find it difficult to share our problems with others.

[REDACTED] harasses us for money, intruding on my workplace, when he is released on parole.

Frustration with incompetent community based mental health services.

Our sadness that our son receives the best mental health care only when he is in prison as this is the only place he accepts boundaries.

c. Personal

Our son's behaviour has resulted in enormous family and marital stress.

It has severely affected the relationship with our 24 year old daughter.

The grief we feel for the loss of a normal family life.

### **Term of Reference 2**

The Methadone program was at times effective when heroin use was the main problem. However with the change of use of drugs to cocaine and ice, there were no harm minimisation programs provided and thus the situation deteriorated rapidly.

### **Term of Reference 3**

Support organizations such as FDS. It is distressing for us when [REDACTED] is not in custody that he has nowhere to live and has poor mental health care. We would like to see more dedicated and enforced long term supported residential and rehabilitation programs. These programs need to provide work and social skills training to reduce the risk of returning to drugs and jail.

Yours faithfully

Susan and Michael Lowy