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Wednesday 15 June

Submission to: House Standing Committee on Education and Employment -

Inquiry into Mental Health and Workforce Participation

I am 26 years old. Over 10 years my education and work history has been intermittently interrupted and affected by my severe depression and anxiety. Many jobs and opportunities have been cut short. I am in recovery – again – but have had the necessary therapy and support to ensure I (touch wood) never have another episode.

I am studying again. This has increased my confidence. I started studying after being involved with a Disability Employment Services provider, referred there from Centrelink. I found Centrelink to be very understanding actually. I wasn't grilled too much and was financially supported without having to see a DES for the first six months.

Though the DES encouraged me to study again, and I was lucky to get a government subsidized TAFE place, there has been very little support or follow up since. They have 'ticked the box' and are not very proactive in discussing my future work prospects and dreams. I am starting to get nervous, looking at jobs, thinking "Oh my God, can I do these? Will I be under pressure and fall in a heap again?" I don't want to talk to the DES about all this. I don't trust them as they haven't shown any care for me at all.

So all I can do is try myself to get back out there, having been unemployed now for a year and a half. I am intelligent and assertive and I know I have skills – I just have to manage my stress levels. Easier said than done. I am going to go back into working in the community services field where I was before I got sick – so my stress will be high. But I will manage it. I have to.

I will keep seeing my psychiatrist and psychologist to manage my re-entry into the workforce and monitor my anxiety and stress levels. I need to be very vigilant about this. But I am disappointed with the DES and their lack of support.

Another concern is that I don't want to lose my Health Care Card when I earn "too much money". Medication is very expensive. I don't want to be in a position where I cut down my medication dosages to an affordable amount. That is not advisable at all. But I have considered it.

I am heartened to see this inquiry. Thank you.