



Submission No: 17

AUTHORISED:

NK 28/3

Dear Bronwyn,

My family and our son live in a turmoil, everyday we watch our son and brother who is addicted to drugs and alcohol and battles with depression trying, until he gives up and gets on the alcohol/ drugs to relieve his agony. He often seeks help for his prescription medication drug/alcohol and mental health issues and at least twice a year for the past 7-8 years goes to a detox bed for a 6-7 day stay. This, to my family and I, is "respite care", and when he comes home we know it is only a matter of days before we re-live the whole "ground hog day" again! We love our son and brother and practice "harm minimization" on a daily basis. Harm minimization is not enough, we need treatment centres with "no time frame" for wellness !!!

I feel that we are being let down by the system in regards to my son's health and well-being. We are told by our son's G.P. that he needs longer than 6 days to detoxify from his addictions particularly benzodiazepines. An "inpatient" management and withdrawal plan is necessary according to the Australian Government Dept. of Health and Ageing internet site. This is implied by the government, but we have not found a place that facilitates this.

We live in Ballarat, the Grampians region that has no detox unit and no rehabilitation unit for adults and all our needs for the many people and their families must be met out-side of the Grampians region. We also have no Family Support Group and no Narcotics Anonymous in Ballarat.

My son's addictions to many drugs and alcohol have been on going for many years. In May 2000 I wrote to the then minister for health and received a letter from Adrian Foley stating that "the government was going to help save lives and improve treatment and rehabilitation services and funding would improve by 55 million a year as well as the extra 75 million over the next 4 years" Back in 2000 a detox bed was available to the patient for 10 days, now it has been reduced to 6 days? Can a time limit be placed on such an illness?

We also would like to inform you that at the cost of one thousand dollars a week our son can enter a detox/rehabilitation unit that is 20 minutes from here and stay until he is well. It is \$1,000 a week, but the average working class family cannot afford this. We feel that this is discrimination against us and many others who do not have the money to enter private clinics.

To my 15 year old daughter this is a social injustice and because we are not rich enough her brother cannot receive the help needed.

Your mission statement refers to "reducing inequalities in health and well-being"

We please ask you to address this situation that we and many other families need help with.

Yours Sincerely,

Joan Faull