

Committee Secretary  
Senate Community Affairs References Committee  
Inquiry into Suicide in Australia  
Email: [community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au)

Dear Committee Secretary:

I previously appeared before the Senate Select Committee on Mental Health on 27 July 2005, as president of Mental Illness Education ACT. I am filing this submission as a private citizen.

As I formerly addressed to the Senate Select Committee on Mental Health, I have experienced severe depression and was diagnosed with bipolar depression before immigrating to Australia from Canada.

Suicide prevention is an extremely important issue to me from both a personal and professional perspective. Since 2005, I have made a presentation on my recovery from bipolar disorder to the *World Psychiatric Association International Congress 2007*; completed a bachelor of social work; and successfully returned to the workforce. I am presently employed as a peer support worker for the Personal Helpers and Mentors Program by Woden Community Service.

At the *International Initiative for Mental Health Leadership 2009*, I launched [mentallympians.org](http://mentallympians.org), a mental health media initiative that the Mental Health Council of Australia has described as a world-first website and “a creative approach to promoting awareness of recovery.”

The initiative is at its early stage of development but one of its key objectives is to inspire hope for individuals experiencing mental health problems by effectively using technology to demonstrate recovery of their peers, as well as reducing social isolation and the damaging effects of internalized stigma.

It is my belief that the reduction of suicide can be accomplished through programs that help to inspire hope, and that people with lived experience of mental illness and recovery are an essential source of hope in this area. Accordingly, it is important for those interested in mental health to figure out exactly how to utilise this valuable human resource.

I would welcome the opportunity to expand on this information in person.

Sincerely,

Keith Mahar