

Dear Folks,

We lost a mature aged son to suicide two years ago. He was reclusive, with mental problems and isolated himself from the family for many years. We had no idea where to find him, except through small hints and rare vague directions. A month before his death we were still actively looking for him.

We were quite distressed to find that he had been under hospital care and had a case worker, quite close to where we lived. At any time we may have called in to visit him, to assure him of our continuing care and love.

Apparently privacy laws prevented any of the authorities from contacting us, had they been given any indication of our whereabouts. This is really shocking. In the event of a psychotic problem, a patient has an unbalanced perception of life and cannot be responsible for crucial decisions. Had we been able to make contact with him in person or through a case worker, and it seems that with a small effort, the case worker or her superiors could have done so, ... it may well have made all the difference to this lost soul.

Being sent back to a stark empty rural environment following hospitalisation is proven to exaggerate the chances of suicide. This happened, and our son died in desperation. He was not found for a week.

Parents must have the right to make contact, to be informed, as their duty of care does not end when a child becomes a legal adult. This man had many skills and was a valuable asset to the community, besides showing remarkable care and outreach to select others, until the months before his death.

The Government has lost a tax payer, the community has lost a valuable able and physically healthy worker, and we have lost a really beloved son who in his mental state was extremely vulnerable. The 'system' has to be able to contact both parents, at least to initiate communication and support the life of any citizen.

This grief which will stay with us for life, could have been avoided.

Please do consider the rights of parents regardless of the individual's age. We still love our children and care for them forever.

Regards, Bev Driver.