



MENTAL ILLNESS FELLOWSHIP of Australia Inc

the lived experience

The Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Economics
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

25 August 2008

Comment on the Inquiry into: Disclosure regimes for charities and not-for-profit organisations

Comments from the Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia [MIFA] focus on the third terms of reference, i.e.

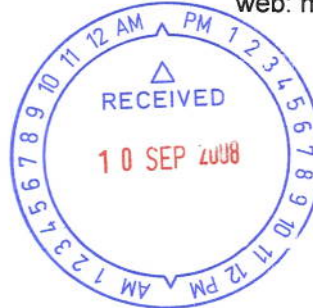
- c. Other measures that can be taken by government and the not-for-profit sector to assist the sector to improve governance, standards, accountability and transparency in its use of public and government funds.

MIFA and its member organisations, listed on this page, are cognisant of the need to maintain proper accountability and governance of the organisation and the services they provide. The mental health sector has moved to a better position in establishing evidence of successful interventions and at the same time encouraging innovation, provided that continuous scrutiny monitors the innovations to establish best outcomes. This has led to an improvement in availability of best practice interventions for people affected by mental illness. While understanding the need, many not-for-profit, charities are working from a slim management resource base. Measures to increase accountability in the charitable sector should therefore take this into consideration.

The plethora of legal obligations required are becoming increasingly complex and the small not-for-profit, charities have a challenging time to maintain legal compliance. The committee should ensure that any changes taken by government that impact on this sector should be accompanied by education programs and assisted by a help-line at the time of introducing changes. Some assessment of the capacity of each organisation's ability to comply with changes should also be undertaken and additional resources to assist in transition should be considered by the committee.

Yours faithfully,
Margaret Springgay
Executive Director Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia
25 August 2008

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MIFA members:

Mental Illness Fellowship of Nth Queensland Inc

Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria

Mental Illness Fellowship of South Australia Inc

Mental Illness Fellowship of Western Australia Inc

Mental Illness Fellowship of the ACT Inc

Schizophrenia Fellowship of New South Wales Inc

Schizophrenia Fellowship of Queensland Inc

Mental Health Carers NT

Association of Relatives and Friends of the Mentally Ill (Tas)