

I would like the following comments/feedback to be tabled as a submission to the recently convened select committee on Mental Health.

Experience of mental health services in Australia

I suspect my submission on behalf of myself and my family will be one of countless you receive from individuals who unfortunately have first hand experience of the current state of the Mental Health system in Australia.

Like unfortunately several thousand families in 2003, we lost a loved one to suicide after a long battle with depression and mental illness. While our family member (my father) had ready access to mental health professionals, hospitalisation (when required), treatments and therapy, the end result was a tragic loss of life. Through repeated treatments during 3 significant episodes of depression over a 25 year period we experienced the frustration and side affects that dad was forced to endure via the current treatments offered to him.

While his experience of ECT, Shock therapy proved successful for his earlier experiences with depression, the impact to his short-term memory, and overall well-being was a side-affect that added to his illness rather than helped with his recovery. He was in the middle of a course of such therapy when he died, and at 73 years of age, it seemed an aggressive form of invasive treatment that a man of his age should be expected to bare.

The same experience with drugs offered, the trial of various medications to find one that was successful for him was long and drawn out, again adding to already stressful situation.

As a family we were anxious to provide support, comfort anyway we could during these periods. We appreciated that the best form of treatment was ours, as it was constant, readily available and there 24/7. However the frustrating lack of information and support services for families and carers of those with depression left us ill equipped to provide the help and support dad needed. We worry now that perhaps what was well intended may in fact been negative and adverse to helping him with his battle with the illness.

We therefore encourage the committee to consider the following in its review of Mental Health in Australia.

- Increased funding and support for research into more affective forms of medication and treatment.
- Increased funding and support for research into the cause and triggers of mental illness, particularly depression.
- Establishment of support protocols for families and carers to provide the back up and appropriate ongoing care that those with severe depression need.
- Increased funding and research to develop a safe and alternative treatment to shock therapy for those suffering depression.

I wish the committee every success in their work on this important issue.