



Committee Secretary
Senate Select Committee on Mental Health.

Dear Sir/Madam...

As the mother of two sons who suffered mental illness over the past 15-20 years, I have noted with alarm the rising suicide rate of those suffering mental illness. My third son who suicided two years ago had been unable to access crisis services, despite a twenty year history of depression and suicide attempts. Two-three weeks before he suicided, he made a will - his first, and left most of his money to non-family members

Rec. 1. The key factor is the inadequacy of funding for mental health. It received 15% of the budget before de-institutionalization. Now it is only 7%. No wonder many people who suffer do not receive treatment.

As the primary carer of my fourth son who suffers schizophrenia, I was physically attacked and verbally abused by new family relatives who claimed he was responsible. Refused by a committee the right to live

with me, he was placed in a unit with three women.
He slashed his wrist, the third attempt, and was rushed
to Melbourne from Bendigo for micro-surgery.

(I do not want my name released to media for submission)
Rec. 2. ^{as} I respect his right to privacy.

Counselling and education of family members
is essential if the patient is to be treated
with consistency. The long-term diagnosis
should be made clear to all, that schizophrenia
is a life sentence. This will require trained
professionals.

Many cases can relate incidents where their concerns
have been ignored by health professionals, only to
have their relative suicide, attempt suicide or, rarely
become violent.

Rec 3 Improve the number of health professionals
in the community. Improve the quality of training
for nurses who at present are all trained as general
nurses. The result is a desperate shortage of mental
health workers.

I hope at last politicians are becoming aware of
the extent of this hidden problem.

cc. Senator P. Fry
Senator T. Toohy
Mental Illness Fellowship
Clifton Hill

Yours sincerely
