

Ian Holland
Committee Secretary
Senate Select Committee on Mental Health
Department of the Senate
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600



18 April 2005

Dear Mr Holland,

I am writing to convey a major concern to the Senate Select Committee on Mental Health, i.e. the lack of funding made available to mental health organisations from all levels of government.

The *SANE Mental Health Report 2004: 'Dare to Care'* states that Australia spends less than 8% of its national Health Budget on mental health. The same report asserts that comparable OECD countries spend upward of 12% of their health budgets on mental health. This is of particular concern for Queenslanders because according to the *National Mental Health Report 2004*, Queensland spends the less per capita on mental health than any other Australian state or territory.

Both the level of funding and the frameworks in which funding is made available to mental health organisations are inadequate. A significantly increased investment is required, particularly in services to those people with ongoing disabilities related to their mental illness, in particular health services, housing people with mental illness. Additionally, more needs to be done to progress the aims of the National Mental Health Strategy with regard to moving toward a community-based system of care (including increased outreach services, psycho-social rehabilitation, residential support and services provided by non-government organisations).

The unavailability of community-based and non-government health and human services has resulted in many people remaining untreated, homeless and at great risk of offending or coming to the attention of police. As a result, Australian prisons seem to have become catchment areas for people with mental illness.

With appropriate support in community settings, rehabilitation and recovery is often possible for people with mental illness. However, the expansion of community-based and non-government mental health services will be required to achieve this goal.

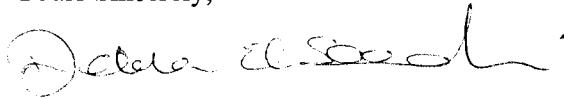
Ozcare currently supports people with a mental illness in Queensland through a range of programs across the state including outreach health services (nursing and social work) in parks, boarding houses, hostels caravan parks, peoples homes and meal centres; accommodation in homeless person's hostels; residential and community based drug and alcohol treatment services; services which assist people to access mainstream health services; and services that assist people to access and maintain appropriate accommodation.

Ozcare constantly fights to find funding to maintain these vital services and always has high-needs people on waiting lists to access these services. Specific funding is required to support

these programs and other programs run by other non-government services that complement these programs. We at Ozcare would be happy to have you visit any of our facilities in Queensland to see first hand the issues being faced by people with a mental illness and the staff working so hard to support them.

If you would like to discuss these issues or visit any of our facilities please contact me on 07 32462732 or M. 0418874699, or email debrael@ozcare.org.au

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Debra El Saadi". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.

Debra El Saadi
State Director Community Nursing and Allied Health Services