

Date: 3 June 2005

Australian Senate Select Committee on Mental Health Attn: Mr Ian Holland, Secretary

Dear Mr Holland

Revised Submission

Our daughter has had severe Schizophrenia for more than 7 years. As her primary carers I/we have been concerned to learn much more only last year that – as an add-on to her illness – her predicament of re-entry into hospital (sometimes 4 times in a year) means

"Lack of Insight" + "Revolving Door Syndrome"

For the last 2 years our daughter is on a Community Treatment Order with daily supervised medication intake, both by the Mobile Support Unit and us.

According to Prof of Psychology Xavier Amador, Cambridge Uni, New York, up to 50% of severe mental illness sufferers have "Lack of Insight". His book "I am not sick, I don't need help", published 2000, indicates that our medical systems don't accommodate that the consumers have a mental block, can't believe they need help unlike in the case of physical doctor-consumer relationships who are both in agreement about treatment. They can end up "On the Streets" and incarcerated as the case of Cornelia Rau has shown.

Terms of Reference

1c. I/we feel that the situations of consumers re-entry into Hospital Systems means a repeat performance all round – doctor/consumer regime as though a consumer 'has insight" and that when medically stabilized can end up on the streets or be catatonic again. The frame of reference of support and treatment is too narrow. A comprehensive psychological support – in hospital and post hospital – needs to be set in place. Trusting counsel support can help to obtain agreements with a consumer to take medication when required. Ongoing follow-up for severe cases can assure that these agreements are honoured.

The main problem as I/we can see is that Psychologist fees are not covered by the Medicare system, putting their services out of reach of nearly all mental illness sufferers. It is, therefore, vital that Psychologists are in future included in the regular treatment as only a combination of Psychiatrists and Psychologists ensure maximum improvements to the Quality of Life for the severely mentally ill. Such a system may help alleviate the high cost of repeat hospitalization.

Due to lack of insight, consumers refuse access to most facilities set up to help them, eg community support groups financed by governments of all levels.

1j+k. Ongoing psychological counsel services could surely reduce the over-representation of mental illness sufferers within the criminal justice system. I/we feel that many incarcerations are due to medication non-compliance – see Cornelia Rau.

