

Sent: Sunday, 1 February 1970 12:44 PM
To: Committee, Mental Health (SEN)
Subject: Submission to Senate Inquiry

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

Dear Committee Secretary

I am writing to ask that more attention be given to Mental Health in terms of training & funding. Many lives are being ruined because of lack of services available to people who suffer a mental illness. It is a great waste of the life of the ill person & a great loss to the community as many mentally ill people are highly intelligent & very creative. The amount spent on mental health in Australia is a smaller percentage of GDP than most other developed countries. The national mental health budget accounts for 7% of the total health budget but 20% of health demand - hardly a fair deal.

My son suffers from schizophrenia; he got it when doing 4th year medicine at Melbourne University. If all had gone well with him he would have gone in to medical research. Now he has no work. He has tried to work but the stress & strain was too much & he ended up back in hospital. He is one of 80% of people in Australia with a mental illness who are unemployed. (National Survey of Mental Health & Wellbeing Bulletin 5, National Mental Health Strategy 2002). If there was a person skilled in understanding his ability & supporting him in the appropriate way & placing him in a suitable position he would be capable of doing some work. As it is he has no work, no friends or social contacts, no goal for his life. Therefore more trained staff are needed.

At present our son lives with us, his ageing parents (close to 80 years). Where will he go when we are not here or incapable of looking after him? He needs supported accommodation & in Canberra at present there are no vacancies. Being sick should not lead to poor housing. More funding is required for purpose run supported accommodation. 24% of people living with a psychotic illness in Australia live in marginal housing - that is they are homeless & live on the streets, or in crisis shelter, or in a hostel.

I am hoping that the Senate Inquiry can improve the lives of the mentally ill with action as well as with words.

Yours faithfully,