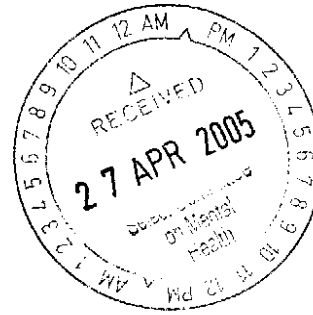


25 April 2005

The Secretary  
Inquiry by the Senate Select Committee on Mental Health  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600



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## SUBMISSION BY SANE AUSTRALIA

Please find enclosed documents forming SANE Australia's submission to the Inquiry on Mental Health.

### Dare to Care: SANE Mental Health Report 2004

This document contains a systematic review of how well State/ Territory and Federal governments have fulfilled their responsibilities in carrying out the National Mental Health Strategy. As may be seen, the report addresses the range of issues covered by the terms of reference of the Inquiry. It is based on experiences reported by thousands of consumers and carers throughout Australia, as well as interviews with non-government organisations.

#### SANE Mental Health Report Findings

- Mental health services are in crisis to varying degrees all around Australia, barely able to cope with people experiencing acute episodes of illness, let alone provide ongoing treatment and support.
- Stigma is systemic in decision-making at the highest political levels.
- Ultimate responsibility for mental health services lies with government leaders at Federal and State levels. It is they who have ensured these services have had such a low priority in policy-making and funding. Federal government has a national responsibility to challenge this institutionalised stigma and lead reform, as it did in the early 1990s.
- The National Mental Health Strategy is in retreat on many fronts, with old-style psychiatric institutions still in place, community-based services being drawn back into hospitals, prison psychiatric units being built instead of discrete forensic hospitals, and prisons becoming de facto psychiatric institutions.
- There are no coherent national strategies covering key issues such as dual diagnosis, rehabilitation, supported accommodation, education and training for family and other carers.
- Anti-discrimination legislation excludes people with a psychiatric or other disability from protection against vilification and harassment (Tasmania excepted).

#### SANE Mental Health Report Recommendations

Leadership by the Australian government of all States and Territories in reform of the National Mental Health Strategy to focus on:

- closure of all psychiatric institutions, and properly-funded implementation of community-based care for all those in need:
  - national strategies for early intervention, dual diagnosis, and treatment of borderline personality disorder
  - Medicare-funded access to psychological treatments provided by clinical psychologists
  - forensic mental health services to replace prison psychiatric units
  - urgent action to recruit and retain mental health professionals
  - genuine involvement of consumers and carers in planning services.
- Increase in the proportion of the health budget allocated to mental health services, from 8% to at least 12%.
- Establishment of a National Mental Health Commission
- to monitor and report on effectiveness of mental health services.
- Implementation of evidence-based, recovery-focused rehabilitation, supported accommodation and employment services for people affected by mental illness, as well as education, training and support for family and other carers through coherent national strategies and provided by non-government organisations.
- Legislative change at Federal and State levels to outlaw vilification and harassment of people with a psychiatric or other disability.

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SANE Australia is a business name of  
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**Recommendations for best practice**

As well as identifying problems, it is important that the Inquiry provide positive recommendations for practical action to improve the lives of people affected by mental illness and their carers. Enclosed is a set of the *Blueprint Guides* which provide a comprehensive summary of research and recommendations for best practice in a range of areas, including:

- Psychosocial rehabilitation
- Employment and psychiatric disability
- Carer Education
- Care of older people with a psychiatric disability
- Planned respite care
- Supported accommodation
- Recreation

We would be pleased to provide further information at a public hearing or other forum, and look forward to working with the Committee on this issue.

Yours sincerely



Barbara Hocking  
Executive Director