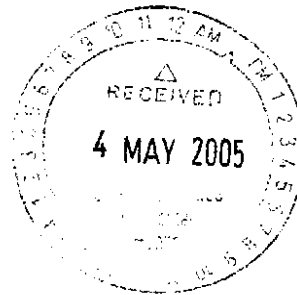


Ian Holland

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



2 May 2005

Dear Mr Holland

I am writing to convey some concerns to the Senate Select Committee on Mental Health.

The first concern is that this enquiry will produce an excellent document which will be put away without any actions being taken to help people with mental illnesses.

The second concern is that there is institutionalised stigma against people with mental illness in Australia. This results in a failure to assist these people to live in the community.

I live in regional Queensland and there is little assistance for people with a mental illness or their families. Very ill people go into the Mental Health Unit for a week, and are then thrown into the community where the families do everything. Families form support groups and assist each other and these groups are regarded as a nuisance by government departments. People without family support are faced with circumstances that we have seen with Cornelia Rau.

There have been suicides and deaths of young people in this area, directly caused by the lack of support. It isn't the mental illness that causes the death; it is the isolation and fear. Yet only the families bear the burden; the community and the government do not take responsibility for these deaths.

BeyondBlue has been excellent in making depression acceptable. Now, schizophrenia needs to be seen as the sad illness it is, not a threat to the community. Even educated people are ignorant of this illness. The Central Queensland University engages in practices that display an appalling lack of knowledge about people with mental illness. People with mental illness can live a meaningful life in the community if they are assisted with housing, education and employment, and treated as human beings with a disability.

My best wishes to you in this enquiry. I hope some lives can be saved. It requires a rescue mission, not more words.

Yours faithfully

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