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Subject: Senate Select Committee on Mental Health

Thursday 5th May, 2005.

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

To whom it may concern,

Firstly, we would like to introduce ourselves to you: Ms Dianne Bellette, Mrs Elizabeth McDonald, Mr Peter McDonald and Ms Nadia Pleban. We are an advocacy group: Break the Psyche; cumulatively, we have over 85 years 'first hand' experience of the Victorian Mental Health System. Our experience spans across the pre and post era of de-institutionalization.

We are pleased that the Parliament of Australia is providing a Senate Inquiry into Mental Health. We would welcome the opportunity to assist this Inquiry by providing witness statements to points of reference: B, F, G, L and M.

Through our experience we have found the Mental Health System to be seriously flawed, not so much by any persons in particular but rather by serious systemic failures. Furthermore, we have found that these systemic failures basically stem from the incorrect assumption that "one hat fits all." Prima facie, the policies and protocols in relation to the delivery of mental health services may appear to be adequate but in reality they fall far short. They simply do not take into account the enormous depth, breadth and variances in mental illness. Nor do they take into account the individuality and complexities of the sufferers of mental illness.

We as concerned citizens call upon the Parliament of Australia Senate Inquiry, to put forward realistic and practical solutions for essential changes to our failing Mental Health System.

We are of the firm belief that a very simple solution can be found by adopting, what we call, the H.E.A.R approach. That is H:-Hear/Listen, E:- Education, A:- Accountability and R:- Research.

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Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours faithfully,
BREAK THE PSYCLE.

DIANNE BELLETTE, PETER AND ELIZABETH McDONALD, NADIA PLEBAN.
ADVOCATES.