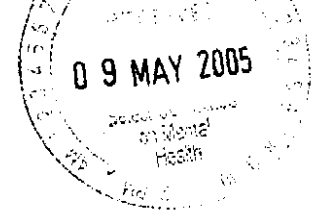


Committee Secretary
Senate Select Committee
On Mental Health
Department of the Senate
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600



Dear Sir/Madam

I am making this submission to tell you my experience and make some suggestions which would help other people in the future.

I am 48 years old and I have had anxiety and depression all my life. I have over the years been to many psychiatrists, psychologists, support groups and have attended both the overcoming anxiety and overcoming depression classes at the Calvary Hospital which I have found were of great help. Without these supports (and the wonderful support of friends and family which I am very fortunate to have) I would not be as well as I am today.

SA I would like to say that I think the Government cutting back on funding to help people with mental illness is in the end not profitable for them. Over the past 25 years I have seen gross cutbacks to ^{Government} mental health facilities in the ACT. If a person with mental illness does not get the help needed straight away they can become much worse and may need to be hospitalised making the recovery process much more lengthy and difficult. I have found over the years that if I get help (before sinking into a very deep depression) then my recovery is at a much faster rate.

A person with mental illness often has a very limited income, relying on a Government pension, therefore expensive psychiatrists and psychologists are out of the question. Many of us must rely on Government employed psychiatrists and counsellors and I believe the quality and number of these doctors is not good enough.

As I can only work approximately 10 – 12 hours per week, and am on a part-pension, I have had many dealings with Centrelink. There were times when I was so frustrated with Centrelink that I ended up feeling completely helpless and extremely distressed. Having to fill out the often complicated forms is also a very difficult task for someone with an illness. Turning up for appointments at Centrelink or at prospective employers is sometimes impossible for someone with anxiety, depression or any other mental illness. However Centrelink threatens to cut our payments if appointments are not met.

Over the last three years I have been regularly attending a support group run by the Mental Health Foundation ACT Inc. which I have found extremely beneficial. I am very grateful for this wonderful service and feel it has helped in keeping me stable.

So I ask please that the Government provide essential services to help people well before they come to a crisis point which could be life threatening and needing costly hospitalisation. Also that Centrelink be more understanding and flexible with people with a mental illness.

Yours sincerely

A blacked-out signature, likely a name, that has been redacted from the document.A blacked-out address or contact information, likely a street name and number, that has been redacted from the document.