

To: SENATOR CHRISTOPHER PHASE  
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY AT  
MINISTER FOR HEALTH and AGEING

13<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2005  
IVAN D. CARNEGIE

④ HCS-HP  
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Dear Senator,

As the Federal Senate Select Committee on Mental Health deadline rapidly approaches, and as I have been unable to contact the advisor who gave me contact details to discuss any concerns about the hard copy of the Victorian Government submission he sent me at Minister Pike's behest, I write directly to you.

Superficially the % of mentally ill among the homeless does not seem to have changed since the mid-1980s although it must be noted data from that era stated 'severely mentally ill'. I have no comparative data for the prison population.

Regardless, it is the numbers not the percentages that must be addressed and there will be fluctuation in this among the low-level recidivist prisoners who are mentally ill, serve their time and re-offend.

What is alarming about the submission is the consideration of having people certified to private psychiatric facilities.

Given that it is private psychiatrists who tend to do this, there is clear conflict of interest even if the certified person is placed in another facility run by the private 'umbrella group'.

That conflict apart, where would be the safeguard? In Victoria's situation this is the Mental Health Review Boards. How often would they meet to enable independent assessment and protect the patient's rights?

Given that only those who are of immediate danger to self or others, appropriate secure facilities within the physical structure would be required, as would sufficient trained staffing numbers to ensure patient safety and staff safety.

Who would pay for a second psychiatrist's opinion?

Would the second psychiatrist be sourced from within the 'umbrella group' or the public sector? If the former, again, a conflict of interest.

Who would pay for the patient's stay?

Nevertheless I am heartened by the State Governments financial commitment in this field even if it is to be incremental as Minister Pike informs me.

In my submission (no. 275) I urged the Federal Government to match the States and Territories on a dollar for dollar basis. If not the 6<sup>th</sup> October report will be of little value to the mentally ill.

Yours faithfully,  
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