



Australian Association of Developmental Disability Medicine

Monday May 20, 2005

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

Dear Senate Select Committee

Re: Submission Senate Select Committee on Mental Health
Dr Jennifer Torr
MBBS MMed(Psychiatry) FRANZCP Member FPOA GCHE
Senior Lecturer and Director of Mental Health
Centre for Developmental Disability Health Victoria

Mental disorders in people with intellectual disability are 3-5 times more common than in the general population but are frequently not recognised or are misdiagnosed and therefore not treated or inappropriately treated. Costs in terms of individual suffering, carer and peer burden and costs to the community are enormous.

Improvements in the social care of people with intellectual disabilities in Australia have not been matched by improvements in mental health care. Indeed the mental health care of people with intellectual disabilities has been characterised by denial, neglect and discrimination.

Denial of access to mental health services to, prolonged delays in the assessment of, or the mismanagement of Australians with intellectual disabilities and acute serious mental illnesses is of major concern.

On behalf of the Executive of the Australian Association of Developmental Disability Medicine (AADDM) I endorse Dr Jennifer Torr's submission to this Senate Select Committee as an accurate and useful representation of the Mental Health system for people with developmental disabilities. The recommendations for improvement in this field are based on well-documented situations and Dr Torr's extensive experience. I would urge you to consider the information presented with due regard.

Yours sincerely

Dr Donna Henderson
Secretary
Australian Association of Developmental Disability Medicine