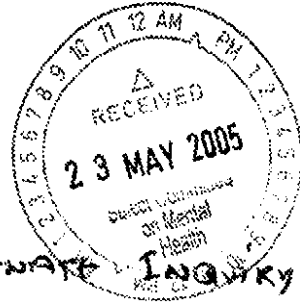


STEPHEN CORRY - ARTIST

THURS. 19TH MAY 2005.



RE: SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE INQUIRY INTO MENTAL HEALTH.

HULLO.

I AM A VISUAL ARTIST AND MUSICIAN AND I AM KNOWN AS A PERSON WHO CONTRIBUTES GENEROUSLY TO THE COMMUNITY WITH MY TIME, EXPERTISE, AND THOUGHT ESPECIALLY ON MATTERS THAT ARE NOT WELL KNOWN OR PROMOTED FACILITIES. I COUNSEL, HELP AND ADVOCATE FOR MANY PERSONS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS. I WORK ON VARIOUS COMMITTEES - QUITE A LOT OVER THE YEARS. I WORK ON ART PROJECTS FOR VARIOUS COMMUNITY AND CHARITABLE GROUPS. I PLAY MUSIC IN MY CHURCH. I DO CLAMPS IN A FUND-RAISING SHOP. I STAND STRONGLY IN THE COMMUNITY AGAINST ILLEGAL DRUGS, PROBLEM GAMBLING AND ALCOHOLISM. I HAVE TAUGHT YOUTH IN MY NEIGHBOURHOOD AND WORK NON-VIOLENTLY FOR <sup>POSITIVE</sup> POLITICAL CHANGE IN MANY WAYS IN MY LIFE.

THIS IS ALL DONE ON A VOLUNTARY BASIS WHICH RELIES ON AN UNDERSTANDING OF CARE AND COOPERATION BY THE AUTHORITIES IN MY LIFE.

OCCASIONALLY THROUGH OVER-WORK OR OVER COMMITMENT I BECOME UNWELL.

I HAVE BEEN TREATED BY CENTRAL SYDNEY AREA HEALTH SERVICE FOR ABOUT TWENTY THREE YEARS AS I HAVE A DIAGNOSIS OF CHRONIC SCHIZOPHRENIA. AT ALL TIMES I HAVE CO-OPERATED WITH MEDICAL STAFF AND HAVE BEEN COMPLIANT WITH MEDICATION AND OTHER CONDITIONS. NINE YEARS OF BEING IN CARE AS A CHILD HAVE NOT HELPED MY CONDITION. I HAVE NEVER RECEIVED FORMAL COUNSELLING OR EVEN ACKNOWLEDGMENT AFTER HAVING SURVIVED THESE DIFFICULTIES.

IT IS MY EXPERIENCE THAT THE TREATMENT FOR MY MENTAL HEALTH HAS BECOME MORE HEAVY-HANDED AND LESS SENSITIVE TO HUMAN NEEDS AS TIME HAS GONE ON.

IT SEEMS THAT MANY OF THE BEST STAFF HAVE LEFT THE SYSTEM AND MANY WHO HAVE STAYED ARE OFTEN TIRED, OVER-WORKED AND OFTEN DE-MORALIZED. THE SYSTEM REALLY LOOKS FROM MY STANDPOINT AS ONE

② THAT IS RUN-DOWN AND UNDER-FUNDED.

THE STORY I AM ABOUT TO TELL IS ABOUT THIS AND IT COULD BE REPEATED AS A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE BY MANY PEOPLE I HAVE TALKED WITH IN THE SYSTEM, A FEW YEARS AGO I WAS ADMITTED TO ROSELLE HOSPITAL (WARD 25) AS A WOLUNTARY PATIENT. AS WHAT IS THE ROUTINE, ALL OF MY PERSONAL IDENTIFY ITEMS (KEYS, MONEY, CARDS, ETC) WERE TAKEN FROM ME. IT WAS AS IF MY IDENTIFY ~~WAS~~ WAS ON HOLD. TO MANY I WAS JUST ANOTHER BURNT-OUT SCHIZOPHRENIC LIVING OFF THE PUBLIC PURSE, OR JUST A NUMBER, AN IRRITANT.

THINGS WERE GOING AS RIGHT AS COULD BE EXPECTED AND I WENT TO BED EARLY FULL OF TRANQUILLERS. IT WAS THE NATURE OF MY ILLNESS TO WAKE UP VERY EARLY. AND THIS WAS PART OF THE REASON I WAS THERE IN THE FIRST PLACE. I WAS EXHAUSTED AS I USUALLY PRESENT MYSELF. I Woke AT 3 AM. MORE THAN ANY OTHER TIME I REALLY WENT TO HAVE A CIGARETTE WHEN I WAKE SO I WENT TO THE NURSE'S STATION AND ASKED FOR ONE OF MY OWN. THE NURSE IN CHARGE SEEMED IRRITABLE AND TOLD ME I COULDN'T HAVE ONE. HE TOLD ME I COULDN'T HAVE MY ART-BAG WHICH WOULD HAVE KEPT ME QUIET AND ENTERTAINED ENOUGH TO WAIT TILL THE DOOR OPENED AT 7 AM. HE OFFERED ME DRUGS TO SETTLE ME DOWN AND TOLD ME TO GO BACK TO BED.

I THOUGHT IT WAS UNFAIR THAT I COULDN'T EVEN HAVE ANYTHING FROM MY ART-BAG AND I SAT ON THE FLOOR OUTSIDE THE NURSE'S STATION. THE NURSE TOLD ME I COULDN'T SIT THERE. I HAD BECOME IRRITABLE FROM WHAT I PERCEIVED AS A GRUE, UNFAIR AND GRUMPY EXCHANGE FROM A PERSON THAT DIDN'T CARE ABOUT A GOOD OUTCOME FROM THE SITUATION.

I STARTED TO SING QUIETLY A IRISH POLITICAL FOLK SONGS AND I WAS WARNED THAT I WOULD BE PUT INTO "THE TIME-OUT ROOM" IF I CONTINUED. UNTIL THIS TIME I WAS REASONABLE BUT I BECAME TIRED OF THIS MAN'S ATTITUDE AND I STARTED SINGING LOUDER. HE STARTED PUNISHING ME DOWN THE STAIRS TOWARD "THE TIME-OUT ROOM".

ON ARRIVAL I WAS ORDERED TO STRIP ALL CLOTHES OFF. THE SITUATION WAS GETTING MORE

②. AND MOST BAZAAR. I THOUGHT I WAS IN HOSPITAL BECAUSE I WAS SICK AND NEEDED CARE. IS THIS THE CARE THAT I NEEDED?

I TOLD HIM "YOU'VE GOT TO BE JOKING!"

HE DISAPPEARED FOR A FEW MINUTES AND CAME BACK WITH FIVE OTHER NURSES. THEY STRIPPED ME NAKED AND PUT ME INTO PYJAMAS. I CAN STILL SEE A BIG GUY WITH TATTOOS SMILING ALL THROUGH THE WHOLE THING.

AT NO POINT DID I ABUSE ANYBODY OR BECOME VIOLENT. WHY WAS I GETTING SUCH HEAVY-HANDED TREATMENT WHEN I DON'T THINK I DESERVED IT.

AFTER THE NURSE IN CHARGE PUSHED ME INTO THE BACK OF THE ROOM THEY LOCKED THE DOOR AND TURNED OFF THE LIGHT. THERE WAS ONLY A MATTRESS ON THE FLOOR AND THE ONLY WINDOW WAS IN THE LOCKED DOOR. IF YOU HATE ANY IDEA ABOUT PSYCHOSIS YOU WOULD IMAGINE WHAT WAS GOING THROUGH MY HEAD.

THEY LET ME OUT ABOUT AN HOUR LATER. I BIDDEN MY TIME TILL THEY OPENED THE FRONT DOOR AT 7 AM. I TOOK OFF, EXTREMELY DISTURBED. I WALKED HOME, IN A MAJOR PSYCHOSIS, BROKE INTO MY HOME. I DECIDED THAT I WASN'T GOING BACK TO THE WARD.

I WAS TOLD LATER BY ANOTHER PATIENT WHO WAS ON THE WARD THAT NIGHT THAT HE WAS PUNCHED IN THE EAR BY THE SAME NURSE FOR HAVING A CIGARETTE IN THE TOILET.

AFTER A LOT OF TROUBLE IN MY LIFE AT THE TIME I GOT MY HEAD TOGETHER ENOUGH TO GET ON WITH MY LIFE. THE RE-HABILITATION OF MY ILLNESS HAD BEEN INJURED. I WAS LOSING MY TEMPER AT TIMES AND WITH THINGS THAT I NORMALLY SHOULD HAVE BEEN CAPABLE OF HANDLING. MY DESIRE TO CO-OPERATE WITH THE AUTHORITIES WAS INJURED. I BECAME MORE SELF-DESTRUCTIVE. THE DUTY OF CARE ENTRUSTED TO THEM HAD BEEN BROKEN. I WAS RELUCTANT TO USE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR YEARS AFTER AND SUFFERED BECAUSE OF THIS. IT WAS ONLY THROUGH SYMPATHETIC FRIENDSHIPS AND MY SOCIAL NETWORK THAT HELPED ME AVOID MORE TROUBLE BECAUSE OF THIS INCIDENT.

④. I LOOKED INTO TAKING LEGAL ACTION. I WAS CORRESPONDING WITH A LEGAL FIRM WHO TOLD ME I HAD A CASE AROUND ASSULT AND ILLTREATMENT EMPRISSMENT BUT THEIR HELP RELIED ON OBTAINING FUNDING THROUGH LEGAL AID. MY APPLICATION FOR LEGAL AID WAS REJECTED - STATING " THAT IN MOST INCOME THE CLAIM WOULD ONLY COVER COSTS, AM I TOO POOR TO GET LEGAL AID?

I COMPLAINED ABOUT MY TREATMENT AT WARD 29 TO THE HEALTH CARE COMPLAINTS TRIBUNAL. I WAS INTERVIEWED BY THE HEAD OF THE NURSING DEPARTMENT AND IT WAS ADMITTED THAT I WAS NOT AT FAULT IN THE SITUATION. THEY ADMITTED THAT THE NURSE WALKED CARE. THEY RECOMMENDED THAT THE NURSE GET COUNSELLING. I WAS ASSULTED, STRIPPED AND LOCKED UP BECAUSE A NURSE WAS DRIVING AT BAD NIGHT? AND THIS IS THE FINAL RECOMMENDATION?

A LOT OF THIS BAD TREATMENT IS ROUTINE IN THE SYSTEM AS YOU WOULD FIND BY TALKING WITH MANY WHO HAVE NEVER HAD A VOICE. THE TIRTS DEMORALIZED ATTITUDES <sup>ARE</sup> ROUTINE NOW BUT IT WAS DIFFERENT TWENTY YEARS AGO.

AS I EXPERIENCED A LOT OF VIOLENCE AS A CHILD AND ADOLESCENT, I HAVE DEVELOPED STRONG PRINCIPLES OF NON-VIOLENCE. I HAVE LIVED BY THESE FOR MANY YEARS. ~~THE~~ TYPE OF EXPERIENCES I HAVE TOLD YOU OF HERE MAKE A MOCKERY OF THESE PRINCIPLES. THE TREATMENT I RECEIVED WAS WELL BELOW AN ACCEPTABLE STANDARD. THE OUTCOME OF THE SITUATION WAS A BAD Joke.

THERE WAS ANOTHER TIME AFTER THIS EXPERIENCE THAT I WAS CAUGHT SMOKING IN THE TOILET AT ANOTHER PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL. AT 3AM ON A SUNDAY MORNING I WAS THROWN OUT OF THE HOSPITAL. CAN YOU SEE WHY I BROKE THE RULES THAT TIME?

I BELIEVE THAT IF I WAS HIGHER IN THE CLASS SYSTEM IN AUSTRALIA THESE SITUATIONS QUITE POSSIBLY WOULD NOT HAVE HAPPENED AND IF THEY DID HAPPEN, THE VICTIM WOULD HAVE GOT MORE JUSTICE AS A MATTER OF COURSE. IT SEEMS THAT THE JUSTICE, CARE, EDUCATION AND TREATMENT IN THIS SOCIETY HAVE A PRICE AT THIS TIME THAT CAN BE MEASURED IN DOLLARS AND POWER. DO WE LIVE IN A MODERN DEMOCRACY? - YOUNG SINCEBY STEPHEN CORRY.

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