

Sent: Tuesday, 19 April 2005 7:51 PM

To: Committee, Mental Health (SEN)

Subject: Submission to Senate Select Committee on Mental Health

Dear Senate Committee

My name is Philip Robertson, I am 58 years old.

I would like to lodge a complaint for consideration by the committee concerning what appears to me to be a lack of support following a recent suicide attempt and hospital admission.

I have suffered from Depression for most of my life and also suffer from Obsessive Compulsive Disorder.

Since 1983 I have had three (3) suicide attempts requiring hospital admission. Also since then I have been admitted to Psychiatric Hospitals on at least seven (7) occasions.

On 18th January, 2005, I was admitted to Calvary Hospital, Canberra, following an overdose of Tegretol, Valium and Mogodon. I remained in the "Intensive Care Unit" for about 4 days and was then transferred to the medical ward. I have no real memory of my hospitalisation in Intensive Care or the ward and do not have any complaints about the care I received whilst there.

I was transferred to the Calvary Psychiatric Ward (2N) on 24th January, 2005 and remained there till 9th February, 2005. I do recall my stay in the Psychiatric Ward and once again have no complaints about the care I received whilst there.

My complaint is regarding the lack of support I received following my discharge from the Psychiatric Unit.

Upon my discharge I had no family support and received no follow up support from the Crises Assessment & Treatment Team or Belconnen Mental Health until I contacted Mr Robert Gatfield of the Crises Assessment & Treatment Team on Monday 21st February, 2005. He indicated that following my discharge I should have been referred to Belconnen Mental Health and said that he would ring them immediately and arrange for them to contact me.

I received a phone call from Monique of Belconnen Mental Health on Tuesday 22nd February, 2005 and she made an appointment to see me on Thursday 24th February, 2005 for an assessment to see if I qualified for a "Case Manager".

Despite me being very depressed at the time of the interview and begging for help she said that she thought that I would not be allocated a "Case Worker". She said that the matter would have to be referred to the "Team" and that she would ring me on Monday with the decision. She did not ring me on the Monday and I rang her on the Tuesday only to be told that I was not going to be allocated a Case Worker as the "Team" (I guess on her recommendation) thought that I should be referred to the "Canberra Men's Centre". From then on I felt like a piece of paper being passed from one desk to another. I felt that each time the piece of paper was moved from one area to another the person moving the paper recorded "another case dealt with" to improve their number of cases dealt with.

Approximately a week later a neighbour rang the Crises Assessment & Treatment Team to say that I was suicidal once again. The Crises Assessment & Treatment Team rang me at home and after I advised them that I had not been allocated a Case Manager they said they would refer my case back to Belconnen Mental Health for a review. Once again I was refused a Case Manager.

I did receive one more call from both the Crises Assessment & Treatment Team and Belconnen Mental Health but did not receive any much needed support.

Some weeks ago it was reported on the local WIN news that in the last twelve (12) months there had been eighteen (18) suicide attempts in Canberra, six (6) of which had been successful. It then appeared to me that if I was one of only twelve (12) unsuccessful attempted suicides in Canberra and I could not get any support there was definitely something wrong with the ACT Mental Health System. Some little time before the above announcement it was reported that there was a large proportion of people who are discharged from hospital who attempt suicide within a week of discharge. I felt very suicidal within the first week of discharge and if my medication had not been restricted by the doctor to fifteen (15) pill per week I am sure that I would not be writing this submission.

I decided to ring Bob Davis of the Crises Assessment & Treatment Team and lodge a complaint regarding the lack of follow up. He suggested that I contact M/s Jackie Andersen and put my complaint in writing. I intend to do this in the near future.

I am currently receiving private counselling but as I am on a Disability Support Pension I am finding the cost of the counselling is putting further stain on my limited income.

I don't want other people who suffer mental health issues and especially those who are driven to attempt suicide to suffer like I did and therefore request the committee to examine my complaint with a view of making Case Managers available to those people who attempt suicide and who request help.

Should you wish to call me to give evidence at a public hearing I would be most willing to do so.

Yours Faithfully

Philip Robertson

