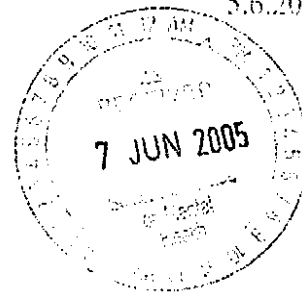


5.6.2005

Secretariat,
Senate Select Committee on Mental Health,
Department of the Senate,
Parliament House,
Canberra, 2600. ACT.



Dear Sir/Madam,

I'm happy for the contents of my submission to be made public but would appreciate my full name and address being kept confidential -- you could just call me Mrs. Bates, Victoria.

As people my family know have required medication for mental health problems, we are writing to request that such tablets continue to be subsidized via the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, at current rates, so that everyone who needs them can afford them. If the scheme is abolished or the cost of medicines rise significantly many people in our community, especially pensioners, would not be able to buy them. Many people with mental health problems have only low-paying jobs and could not afford an increase in the cost of tablets.

People who are underemployed/unemployed due to their mental illness are not likely to be able to pay anywhere near the full government cost of the medications, which they depend on to have their best level of functioning in society. If they were unable to access these medicines they may suffer being dysfunctional, and also add to the load on public hospitals and health centres.

A condition which is not the patient's own fault should not cost him/her anything to take care of (apart from taxes) and that is one reason we support a universal PBS, public hospitals and bulk billing.

Mental health services have been underfunded in our state for years and we need an assurance that this area will be funded as adequately as other health needs. (We did note that the Victorian government has increased funding in this year's budget).

Yours faithfully,

A thick black horizontal bar redacting the signature of the sender.

A thick black horizontal bar redacting the address of the sender.