

From: Niki Edawrds
Sent: Tuesday, 14 June 2005 4:27 PM
To: Committee, Mental Health (SEN)
Subject: submission

Who are we???

I write to advise the inquiry of a hidden group of people who are often denied appropriate mental health services. Although they are a small population (between 1-3% of the general population), approximately 30-40% of this group will experience mental health problems. Sadly, their mental health problems are often misdiagnosed, inappropriately treated, or not recognised initially. Of more concern, is the fact that they are often found in the homeless populations or inappropriately placed in hostels, nursing homes or other less than favourable living circumstances...

Burdekin in his inquiry noted with concern the plight of this group of people - he thought they formed the most neglected group within those who had mental health problems....the second national mental health plan/policy mentioned them briefly but the next plan almost lost them within its purview....

This group of people often have "challenging behaviour" and can be incredibly difficult to assess, diagnose and treat. They can present atypically and do not respond to psychotropic medications as do the general population. They have also been described as one of the most medicated groups in society....

Who are they???

They require constant support and assistance across the lifespan....yet they are a very diverse group - their needs are often very individualistic...in the UK and parts of the USA psychiatrists specialise in the treatment of this group - in Australia, they fall through the gaps in service provision because they dont neatly fit into eligibility criteria...they dont "fit" because of their cross-agency, cross-professional needs....in Australia few psychiatrists have the inclination, the skills or the expertise to be involved, this is a huge unmet need, clinicians dont know how to help this group - how to serve their best interests....

They are....people with an intellectual disability. Theirs is an untold story - their is the saddest story of all.....

I have attached some recent reports I have produced, with the support of Queensland Health and Disability Services Queensland. Chapter 1 and 6 are from a large project I completed - there are additional chapters I could forward if you so desired. I would welcome the opportunity to bring stories of individuals, their families, their carers...to you for your consideration. In particular, the families have a powerful story to tell...and their children deserve a better life.

Yours sincerely,

Niki Edwards BA BSocWk MPA PhD (cand)

Clinical Coordinator/Lecturer
Queensland Centre for Intellectual & Developmental Disability (QCIDD) Mater
Hospital, Raymond Tce, South Brisbane Queensland 4101 Australia