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27 AUG 2005

26-8-05

Select Committee on Mental Health

Senior Clerk

Dear Sir or Madam

Thank you for the terms of reference which I received in the mail today.

My ~~experience~~ experiences of mental health issues are very wide and I won't attempt to write all the details at this late stage. I shall just offer a summary (very brief) and my time to speak to anyone at length in more detail.

① My father had a breakdown (I understand as a result of an accident (vehicle) and post war trauma).

He beat my mum in fits for 2 years and then cried about what he did ~~for about 3 years~~ ^{for about that time}.

When I was 12 - (eldest of 5) mum could take no more and asked for help. Dad used to line us kids up and consider shooting us all and then change his mind also - he was diagnosed with Schizophrasia - head bent ignored.

Dad was put in Morisset Mental hospital and given years of shock treatment. It destroyed him, even a child could see. (in 1954).

The authorities actively pushed mum to not keep in contact. Visits were discouraged.

When we got older I kept in contact with dad and in 1960s he was even allowed to spend a couple of weekends with me and family, (frowned on).

By this time the authorities had mum and all, except my youngest brother, terrified of dad.

I visited when I could and had to ask to take dad out for lunch etc. I used to write to him and send presents and photos all the years.

About 1967 one doctor told me dad was in rehabilitation and to encourage family to visit. I had no hope by then. I was never explained about rehab.

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Then one day I went to visit and was told dad was^{at} there and they couldn't tell me where he was. Many weeks later and many tears shed a kind warden at Morriset told me dad was at Armidale.

The weekend visits stopped too far to go and work. I managed to visit just on holidays about once a year. And write or send parcels. Dad was lonely and I confused. The family convinced I was wrong keeping in touch (prior authority attitude).

Then in about 1996 dad's birthday present was returned to sender. Many weeks of tears and worry a kind policeman at Armidale (again I left no stone unturned to find my dad) informed me dad had been sent to Mittagong - "so far away". I still wrote and looked forward to visiting one day. Then I got cancer, really serious.

Before I was well I was notified that dad was in Bernal hospital. I got driven down to see him - he was improving. Two sisters and one brother went too. Dad was 63 now - you could see he still loved us but was nervous ^(he hadn't seen the other girls as adults) and not being looked after properly.

Next time I got taken to see dad (a week later) he was unconscious (had ~~be~~ been given morphine). I had been assured he was not in pain - nothing broken (he'd had a fall in hospital) and we could bring him home - we had never been given any say or idea that DAD could come home all those years.

Then his chest got worse, as he was unconscious he battled on for 2 more weeks. All the doctor could say to us was dad was OLD, HOMELESS, HAD HISTORY OF MENTAL ILLNESS AND NO FAMILY!!

After dad's death we tried to get some answers to many things, it just never happened. Even HCCC or Coroner couldn't help.

On dad's death bed a mental health ^{officer} told us that dad was stabilised in 1967. A devastating revelation, after the life of hell with no explanation or support all those sad, lonely.

devastating revelation, ^{after} ~~no~~ ^{my} no explanation or support all those sad, lonely &

teaching for over 40 years. (preventable deaths)

4. I've lost students to suicide - drugs or mental illness (all were preventable)

5. Been assaulted by students with untreated mental illness.

6. Seen many families destroyed by unaddressed or properly dealt with mental illness.

7. The increase in drug use over the years is causing much more mental illness (a fact just ignored).

8. Because of my life experience I have helped save many young ones - no one else cared or wanted to try.

9. I've lost a few students as a result of others with neglected mental illness (murder).

10. I've cried with many with ignored or ridiculed post natal depression.

11. I've written volumes pleading for someone to realise these people and their families need support, help understanding. That they are people who love, have feelings are sick and need help. That sometimes they need a place for a while till they are well and so other people are safe. Not a life sentence like dad and his 5 kids got!!

The numbers, because of our lifestyle, are growing, and the real help and safe haven for these people are GONE. Sick people need proper care and rehabilitation in a properly staffed facility where they and everyone is safe till they are well.

I haven't lost hope - hence I write - Happy to talk to

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