LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

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22nd December, 2015

Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Health
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
Sent via email: health.reps@aph.gov.au

Members of Parliament: Ms. Lisa Chesters, Mr. Steve Irons, Ms. Karen McNamara

Dear Members:

I write in response to concerns raised by Mr. John Mulder, CEO of Bendigo Health Care Group, in a letter to you dated 16 December, 2015 about my presentation at the Public Hearing of the Standing Committee on Health held in Bendigo on 18th November, 2015.

I wish to clarify that my comments about mental health services for people with intellectual related specifically to experiences I had in a previous position at the Centre for Developmental Disability Health Victoria, Melbourne, in which we saw people with Down syndrome for Alzheimer's disease assessments. The Centre also provided a more general psychiatric services for adults with intellectual disability. My reference to this service occurs in the transcript. Through this service, we did have a continuous stream of adults with significant mental health problems and psychiatric disorders who experienced difficulties in accessing other public psychiatric services. Patients came from all over the state. In addition, since being in Bendigo, I have interviewed families for research who have reported their desperation at not being able to find ongoing psychiatric support and who have travelled to Melbourne for a service. Those of us working in disability, including my Psychiatric colleagues, have long been aware of unclear pathways to psychiatric services for people with intellectual disability, evident all over Australia.

It is reassuring to know that Bendigo Health Psychiatric services do not discriminate against people with intellectual disability, as noted by Mr. Mulder. The challenges seem to be understanding why people in the community who have family members with intellectual disability report problems in accessing services and how to address them. I look forward to working with relevant Bendigo Health staff to meet the needs of people with intellectual disability who experience psychiatric disorders.

Yours sincerely,

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Teresa Iacono
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Cc: Mr. John Mulder
Prof. Pamela Snow
Prof. Amanda Kenny