

Re: Inquiry into Better Support for Carers

A.O.C. 1/7/08

### **What would make my job easier?**

As a carer of an 18 year old son diagnosed with schizophrenia about 18 months ago, I am concerned about the following:

#### **Little knowledge about mental illness among the general community, family and friends.**

The Beyond Blue website, phone number and advertisements have increased awareness in the community about depression. It would help reduce the stigma associated with other mental illnesses like schizophrenia, if there were similar advertisements explaining the condition. The main media messages in regard to mental illnesses other than depression are stories about violent mentally ill people going on shooting rampages or stabbing somebody or being shot dead by police in self defense. Most people with mental illness are not violent, just like most ordinary people are not violent. I think greater understanding of other mental illness in the community such as schizophrenia would assist in a young person's job hunting and fitting in with the rest of society.

National helpline established, with a catchy name.

#### **Steep learning curve for new carers of mentally ill, whose illness is fairly recent**

- I found I needed a great deal of information from mental health service staff. Lots of communication with staff involving many hours over months to come to grips with a difficult to understand illness.
- Brochures are useful
- Not much available from bookshops or city council libraries.
- What was especially helpful was a carer snapshot workshop conducted by Mental Health Council Australia. Useful exchange of information about services provided by government departments and also the opportunity to give information back to government staff. Even though some of the information is available on paper brochures, it is bewildering. It really helped to have the face to face contact.
- Workshops for carers given by MHCA and also ARAFMI have reduced the isolation and improved knowledge of mental illness. They have been a terrific tool to communicate with other carers and mental health staff. I am concerned that there are many carers out there who never hear about any carer workshops. It was only by chance I heard about ARAFMI.

#### **More opportunities for young people with mental illness to socialize and get confidence**

Sitting at home being bored, lonely and sad is not healthy for anybody. When first diagnosed, the young person is generally not well enough for study or work. This limits their social interaction. More places/opportunities for social interaction in a safe, supportive environment. I feel this would assist in the recovery process of the young person.

**Enough beds in adult inpatients when needed during an acute phase of the illness**

Being a carer of a mentally ill person is stressful enough without having the worry that there may not be a hospital bed available when needed.

**Acute care in hospital, followed by day program and then community health**

Are there enough places for ill people for the transition between hospital and community health? After my son's first acute phase of his illness when he left hospital he was fortunate enough to get a place in a day program. He was too ill for community health. It seemed the luck of the draw he was able to get into the day program.

**Easier access to mental health services geared to young adults**

Schizophrenia generally first becomes apparent during the time between adolescence and young adulthood. The transition between accessing child mental health and the adult health systems could be smoother for the young person and their family. If there are suitable programs for young people, they are not generally available or well known enough even for people working in the mental health field.