

Monday, August 09, 2004

Dear Sir / Madam

Enclosed is a document for your senate inquiry. I hope that it can be considered along with the other submissions even though it is a little late. Sorry I am a bit late but it took three weeks to prepare this document but I feel that it is vital information. Please will you get on with the job and do something positive before other lives are ruined like mine was.

Yours most sincerely,

Barbara Horniblow.

A.B.I. REHABILITATION IN THE VICTORIAN COUNTRYSIDE.

Firstly I must introduce myself - Mrs Barbara Horniblow, now a very young 61yo, who had a nearly fatal fall from my huge, grey thorough-bred horse, while riding to hounds, with the Oaklands Hunt Club, opening hunt 4th May, 1976. My husband & I had been foxhunting for five years, I was an excellent rider and horsewoman, but we all have accidents, big and small in life, it is what you do with what's left that really counts. I ran an Arabian Horse Stud Farm on our 60 acre property at Freshwater Creek, I was also mother of a boy 13 ½ and a girl almost 11, both at Geelong College - their first co-ed year. Prior to buying this farm, I was the leading soprano in Geelong's top choir, so I was a very busy girl. However all these activities came to a halt with my fall.

My riding hat came off when I fell, so with no head protection, I paid the price - brain stem injury. This is a report explaining my thoughts, the endless frustrations, all caused by my physical limitations. These should have never been allowed to occur, once the pain left my body, the powers that be should have had the brains to have me admitted to the Royal Talbot or a good Rehabilitation hospital so I could have been worked every day until optimal, if not complete recovery was achieved. I have been admitted to several good hospitals, but at the first Talbot, I was still in slight pain, so they just sent me back to Grace MacKellar Geriatric Institution, saying if I was ever going to walk, I'd be doing so by now. They never gave me a chance of proving myself, two months later I was ready to receive unlimited therapy, but they would not re-admit me! Back to my fall, my prostrate body was raced to the Royal Melbourne by Ambulance, the Ambo's had to do a tracheotomy as I couldn't even breathe, then I was put in ICU and left to die for one week. As I did not oblige, finally they operated; then came my big sleep, in a coma for five months. Still all the doctors predicted death, or IF I lived, I would only be a vegetable. Eventually I awoke and I fooled them all - I lived, although completely irrational and confused at first, just mentally wafting in and out of awareness. I was still sane but in physical agony, caused by damage to the nerve endings throughout my body. All my movements required retraining; I was taught to blink my eyes for yes and no, my only method of communication. I do believe I was left for a purpose, to fix the Government's lousy rehabilitation set up for young country Victorians.

Then came the next conundrum, where to be placed for correct rehabilitation. Twenty eight years ago, there was nowhere to go but the local aged care facility. For the next five years I was in screaming agony, with no speech, just periodical blood curdling screams, no voluntary movement, a complete wreck who needed full nursing care. When the pain finally left the 'home' thought I was cured; the fact that I still had very poor speech and minimal movement was irrelevant, I was alive what more could I ask for. If I had eventually been placed in a good rehab. hospital, my life could have been a joy, regaining the use of my hands, arms and legs, not be just left to rot in that institution.

BUT, as I was a country lass, the only center offering complete nursing care was a large geriatric nursing home and this is where I was placed for almost fourteen years, at the tender age of thirty three. Spinal injuries are acceptable in a few excellent rehab., hospitals in Melbourne, but young brain injury or stroke cases from the country, are not admitted! So it's into the local geriatric home where they can give you complete nursing care 24 hours a day. Shock, horror, I did not even know of the existence of such places; so to end up in a 4 bed room, filled with senile, incontinent, moaning old dears was completely devastating. Other inmates were content to sit around doing virtually nothing, games, handicrafts, or watching T.V., till their number was up, but I required unlimited therapy and mental stimulation, neither of which was provided. I should have received unlimited counseling, but this never happened either. Therapy was limited to maybe five hours a week if I was lucky. The pain was so bad for the first five years I just did not care!. However time and God are great healers.

By the time all the pain left me I was raring to go, mentally fit again, in spite of life in that joint. It was only the divine inspiration and the love given by my family and a few good friends, a basic built-in survival instinct which kept me going in that institution for almost fourteen years. Sheer perseverance and desire to prove the point that I could do it, made me determined this old folks home was not going to get me for life! I made my great escape on the 12th of June 1990, declaring that once I was free of this entrapment I'd fix things so other poor young souls would not suffer my fate!. Well its been over 14 years, I've been battling all this time to get myself back to normal. I tried a good rehabilitation hospital all '91, but I had been brainwashed by life in the home to believe I couldn't do a thing, it was treacherous. Even though at Royal Talbot they got every muscle in my body moving I had half lost the ability to instigate any movement for fear of injury.. I had enough self-belief to set myself up in my own unit in a suburb of Geelong, with carers coming in 6 hours a day.

I now live on the invalid pension, with council home help twice a week, I do all my shopping and go to church by M.P.Taxi in my electric chair. Also go to my husband's & my girlfriends second much smaller farm every Saturday, to save carers hours and my sanity! They had to move from my old 60 acre farm as Bryan had a severe heart attack, nearly died, so although he has fully recovered, he must take care. A few years ago with help from Linkages, I have found myself a stage hypnotist, he was also a retired local Anglican Vicar, a psychologist, hypnotherapist, so he knew it all. He spoke to my husband and I for ½ hour, then Bryan left and he did hypnotherapy with me. From this experience I have learned that all of my old movement is still there, but there is a definite block being thrown up, probably by my subconscious as some form of self protection.

I have set myself the goal of fixing the lousy country rehabilitation situation for other young Victorians, Therefore it would be less stressful for me to remain a semi-quadruplegic, a much less problematical situation; as no one really believes that I could - should have been any better. So until I can prove otherwise, I must be content to remain a totally frustrated soul, treated as a useless nothing and be happy to remain a compulsory useless semi-Quadriplegic

There should be three young folks rehabilitation hospital/homes in the countryside, one servicing western Victoria, another the north central area and one more in Gippsland. Then other poor young country victims of society would not have to suffer the indignity, degradation of being placed in geriatric institutions. This was how it was over twenty eight years ago, still is now and will be for eternity, unless it is brought to the attention of all the right people. Then some positive action should be taken to rectify this abysmal situation. My ultimate goal in life now is to bring this to fruition.

The doctor I saw for hypnotism, after hearing of my success with the Bowen Technique of Healing years ago, said that if it worked once, this is the only way to go, just continue with this treatment till you have more success! So as I was totally frustrated, fed up with everything just needed a good break away to relax, unwind and recharge my batteries so I'm ready to face all my rehabilitation worries again. Three years ago, my husband, Dawn and I went to The Grampians for a 5 day holiday at a caravan park. My daughter & son-in-law and their children came down; also his parents, so it was quite a family holiday. I had a carer from Stawell Multicare who paid her 5 hours a day. This lady came morning to toilet, shower, dress and give me breakfast, then returned for the evening meal, toilet etc. Bryan cared for me all day, a few glorious drives and so on. We hired a few cabins and they had a disabled bathroom on the grounds. First holiday I've had in 11 years, so felt it was about time for a mental break from everything! So good to be free of rostered carers hours, set mealtimes and the well-organised chaos of my daily life, forget all my worries and relax.

I have been living in Highton for ten years now. I was living in a block of units, 3rd in the middle of five with rough-necks on either side, I had to get away. A lovely home, the rear one of two units came on the market, late 1999. My home is nearly at the end of a crescent so very peaceful and quiet. Thank God for a good parental inheritance, I had it modified for a wheelchair case, which I should have never become; but no correct therapy at the right time, so I am classed as a weightbearing semi-Quadriplegic. I was referred to a Professor in Melbourne, who prescribed Botox intra-muscular injections in my right arm to reduce rigidity of the muscles. This gave me the ability to almost fully extend my right arm, essential movement for me to be able to operate the R.H. controls on my electric wheelchair.

The major problem with this procedure, it meant a ten day stay in Ward 3, GRACE MAC KELLAR Institution, a temporary rehab ward for short term cases. I was treated like a lump of dead meat at every transfer, thrown into a sling hoist and dumped on to my Electric wheelchair. Up onto my shower chair after breakfast in bed, then toilet, showered and dressed, hair, makeup made ready to face the day. My physio consisted of stretching my right arm then putting it into a plaster cast, to keep it straight, as all the muscles, tendons in both arms have contracted badly. I wear a splint on my left hand and forearm to keep it straight all day, then as my driving hand was immobilized with the plaster all week, I almost lost the ability to drive - control my chair. My wheelchair was converted to a manual and I was at the mercy of the staff full time! I had two 1 hour stands on the standing frame through- out my stay. No standing on the standing hoist for every transfer, no walking at all. I wondered what effect this would have on my legs. Discharged lunchtime on Friday, I settled back into my abode, but found the power had gone off while I was away. I had lost all my coded in 'phone numbers. When my lunch-toilet girl arrived, I got her to ring my case care manager - Linda, who was able to call in for ½ hour, problem solved! It was back to my regular day out in the country on Saturday at Bryan & Dawn's place. At my first toilet stop, I learnt what 10 days of virtually no standing on the s. hoist and no walking had done to my legs. They just about gave way under me. Thank God for my voice and poor 67yo., (now 70) husband Bryan's quick thinking, both saved me from two bad falls that first day out of the home. After a few days of using my standing hoist at home again, and a good one hour stand on my standing frame in my lounge, my legs have regained their strength, I can stand safely now; where will it end? I had more Botox injections in my right wrist/hand area, but this didn't result in a normal, straight arm and a hand so I'm having more Bowen therapy!

As both legs are good and strong, quite willing to work again, I have a strong back, both my legs and back are bending and flexing for hours most days. This is while I am working at my desk, operating my computer, writing my second book, or doing documents like this. I have excellent balance, so I can see no good reason why, with more time, encouragement, Bowen Technique of Healing, I should not become a normal completely ambulant woman again. Subsequently I've been told it is illegal for any carers to help me walk, or workout on my gravity rider machine, possible injury - suing! Bryan's heart dubious!

This would be great food for the media, giving me the much needed ammunition to hit both the State - Federal Governments. I would have them establish the three rehabilitation Hospitals in the Victorian countryside for young accident or stroke victims of society. As we all know this is an imperative, must do situation, so all helpful suggestions will be most gratefully received. Someone has to do it and after losing the last 28 ½ years of my life, I feel who better qualified? It has been years of total frustration but a great learning experience, I know exactly what is required.