



26-04-05

Submission to  
Select Committee Secretary

I am writing to the Parliamentary Secretary on the important matter of insufficient funding, services, and provisions for persons suffering from mental illnesses, and their primary carers.

My background is as follows. I am the primary carer for my chronic ill daughter who suffers from schizophrenia, anxiety, O.C.D's and depression for these past 20 years. I have had to leave my position as a senior social worker R.G.H.(H) after 20 years working in TCH/CCU hospital settings. I receive a carers allowance of a laughable \$45 odd dollars a week.

I receive no other assistance, benefits or relief from my most important role as a full-time carer. Recently I fractured my ankle (3 bones which did not heal appropriately) and was hospitalized for 4 days, then bed-bound for 10 weeks (in plaster cast). To add further insult to this injury I had a call from Dept of Social Security informing me that I was unable to leave my home & care of daughter for this period of time while hospitalized, due to my carers allowance commitments. I needed to inform the Dept. of my hospitalization and the period of time that I was "not caring for my daughter". I was informed that respite care was available for my daughter. Of course she would never leave our home for R/H. And I see from recent statistics 98% of mentally ill persons refuse R/H care. I was also offered an appointment with their

social worker, although there was a 2 month waiting list for this appointment. Cold comfort when I have worked in a senior position caring for mentally ill people for over 10 years.

I am no different from any other full time carer, except perhaps I have the benefit of experience and education in the mental health field. But these advantages do not help me in anyway. At the end of the day I remain in an ~~an~~ severely disadvantaged position, trying to maintain ~~an~~ "normality" in a very abnormal environment without any respite or relief that is applicable to my daughter's care needs, or importantly to mine.

When I die my greatest concern is the total lack of care or provision for my daughter who will be unable to remain within independent living. Institutionalization will cost the government enormously - for the present all these costs fall onto me and every other carer in my position. Government ignores the complex needs of mental illness of the mentally ill & their carers. There is a vast need for a mental health reform agenda that sufficiently funds new and innovative strategies to provide a humane safety net for the mental health portfolio.

I have examined the National Mental Health Strategy - its aims and objectives.

This is a wordy document with little actual committed ACTION. Sounds good on paper but doesn't really work as far as I can ascertain. There is an obvious lack of sufficient funding. Mental health remains the very poor cousin in the Health Budget. Stigmatization also remains a huge concern. Over these past 20 years I have not seen any lessening of the stigma mental illness continues to carry, mental illness remains very unpopular with the community within Gov. funding.

yours [REDACTED]