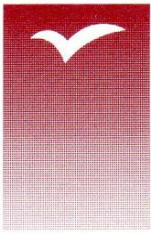


**Submission
No 19**

INQUIRY INTO DRUG AND ALCOHOL TREATMENT

Name: Dr Penny Brabin

Date received: 28/02/2013



15 Feb 2013

[General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2](#)

Submission Re: Drug & Alcohol Treatment Inquiry

Dear Madam/Sir

RE: Dr Ross Colquhoun and Naltrexone Treatment

My Background

I have been a registered Psychologist and Member of the Australian Psychological Society since 1979 and was made a Fellow of the Society in 2002 as a result of my contributions to both the profession and the Society. I have four degrees from Monash University - an undergraduate degree with a major in Psychology (BSc), a post-graduate degree as a fourth year in Psychology (BEd), a research degree in child development (MEd) and a research degree in Psychological Medicine on bereavement trauma (PhD).

After two years as a secondary school teacher I worked as an Educational and Developmental Psychologist for 10 years and have been in independent professional practice since 1986 also developing my skills as a Clinical Psychologist. A large part of my practice has been with adults and adolescents with emotional problems resulting from family history, trauma and mental health diagnoses, specialising in the loss of a baby or child and including parenting and relationship difficulties.

I have presented academic papers both nationally and internationally on my doctoral studies and have conducted training and information sessions for medical, funeral, grief counselling and community groups in relations to this.

Over the last 25 years I have developed extensive skills in Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, training through the Albert Ellis Institute in New York, and conduct training for psychologists and health professionals in this approach as a faculty member of the Australian Institute of Rational Emotive Therapy. More recently my academic interests have focussed on effective therapy integrating a holistic approach encompassing theory from our philosophical origins within the rational empiricist CBT framework and I have presented papers professionally on the essential components of therapy that is effective in the long-term.

Contact

I have known Ross Colquhoun for over 10 years after meeting him at a national Private Psychology conference in Melbourne. I am aware of his academic achievements, including the publication of his doctoral thesis on the use of naltrexone for opiate treatment, and his qualifications to work in the addictions field. I was impressed with his work in addiction treatment and on subsequent trips to Sydney visited his clinic where he showed me his facilities and procedures. Over this period he has referred his ROD clients to me for after-care counselling and I have referred clients to him to undergo detoxification and treatment using naltrexone. We have maintained regular professional contact.

My impressions of Ross' program

Ross set up a program to provide a treatment regime with interventions based on the psychological issues that under-pin addiction problems, facilitated by the use of naltrexone, as the medical treatment programs available typically fail to address these broader long-term issues related to managing the addiction, in the main, simply helping clients to detox - as though in coming off the substance it is the drug itself that is the problem rather than the underlying, undealt-with emotional issues.

Ross' reported success is most impressive and far eclipses those reported from other programs. Indeed, I have had reports from drug-using clients sharing resources, opportunities and contacts regarding *obtaining* drugs as they commune in doctors' waiting rooms and at methadone distribution points!

Ross' availability to his clients and ability to encompass an effective counselling and physical treatment regime indicated both experience and dedication to this area of work. I was also impressed with the documentation of his thorough intake, advisory and pre-admission service assessing the suitability of clients for the program and always including an on-going psychological treatment program to minimise the possibility of relapse – typically high in drug addiction.

As there was no detox program in Melbourne as psychologically comprehensive I have encouraged several clients wanting to become drug-free and effectively remain drug-free to attend Ross' program. He has also sent some clients from Melbourne to me for continued counselling after their detox in his clinic. Although not a significant part of my work I have had significant experience in addiction treatment as a common problem in human behaviour and, with Ross' support for the drug related issues, have had success with these clients.

Coupled with his undoubted ability to form a therapeutic relationship, to use his assessment skills, honed over many years of report writing and clinical practice, it is my impression that his use of assessment questionnaires and instruments is more than adequate. I am also aware from the clients I have worked with, who have been treated

by Ross that he has obtained informed consent and ensures that clients have a thorough understanding of the nature of the treatment and the risks and involved as well as informing them of alternative treatment but also giving high priority to the needs and wishes of individual clients.

Thus, from my understanding of other treatment facilities, I believe that Ross' program more than adequately meets standards of best practice, particularly relating to his procedures for assessment and treatment of psychological issues.

In my long acquaintance with many in my profession I deem Ross whole-heartedly to be a psychologist of high standing who has always acted with the greatest integrity and professionalism in all our professional dealings and in my observations of his work and availability to his clients.

I hope Ross will be able to continue his effective work in the arena of successful detox and rehabilitation from the debilitating effects of drug addiction on patients and their families.

Penny Brabin PhD FAPS