

Submission  
No 42

**INQUIRY INTO THE PROVISION OF DRUG  
REHABILITATION SERVICES IN REGIONAL, RURAL AND  
REMOTE NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Name:** Mr Steven Roberts

**Date Received:** 5 July 2018

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## Submission to the Health and Community Services Inquiry into the provision of drug rehabilitation services in regional, rural and remote New South Wales

My name is Steven Roberts, I am an Aboriginal man and elder of the Widjabul tribe in the Bundjalung nation. I have the firsthand knowledge and experience of the devastating impacts of drug addiction in my family. My two sons have both suffered from addictions to drugs and one of them also struggles with mental health issues. Both have been involved in the criminal justice system. So I have an extensive understanding of all the issues around these problems, especially how they impact Aboriginal people.

I attended the hearing in Lismore last week and was told that although submissions have formally closed, I could still make one. The points which I wish to make in relation to the Inquiry are:

1. I believe that it is necessary for there to be some sort of legislative mechanism for parents and/or grandparents to be able to compel their children (both youth and adults) to go to detox and rehabilitation. And this needs to be available before they enter the criminal justice system. If necessary, this should be court ordered. My idea would be that parents or grandparents would put on an application to the court to enable the person be taken directly to a detox or rehabilitation facility. I understand that there are issues around this, but as someone who has been directly affected by someone who is in denial of their very chronic addiction which has caused a lot of harm and distress in my family, I believe that this sort of mechanism is necessary in certain circumstances.
2. My other point is that there is a total lack of rehabilitation for children. There is one in Coffs Harbour and one in Dubbo but both are for kids who are already involved in the criminal justice system. We desperately need a facility up here to be purpose built for young people to either self-refer or be referred as per above, to deal with their drug addiction. This needs to be available for kids before they start committing crimes. Waiting till then is detrimental to all our community and it is unacceptable given the amount of drug abuse there is within our community even our schools.
3. I understand that many other people have mentioned that there is a need for a lot more rehabilitation centers in NSW. I really want to reiterate this point. Drugs and alcohol are destroying our society and jailing people is not helping.

Thank you for your consideration of these very important issues.

Steven Roberts  
3 July 2018