

Submission
No 17

**INQUIRY INTO EQUITY, ACCESSIBILITY AND
APPROPRIATE DELIVERY OF OUTPATIENT AND
COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CARE IN NEW SOUTH
WALES**

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 21 August 2023

Partially
Confidential

As a carer I have experienced a wide range of interactions with the health care system in New South Wales. It is very traumatic to revisit some of them and heartwarming to think of others. I felt I wanted to share my perspective of my son's mental health journey through the system to highlight the recurring issues over almost 30 years. The system seems slanted towards crisis care and it is difficult to navigate the services prior to a crisis requiring ambulance, police and long hospital stays.

The biggest hole in the system is Transfer of care out of hospital into the community which has often resulted in poorer outcomes for my son. The community care teams are overwhelmed and are often limited by the lack of communication at discharge. The carer is left stranded, often uninformed and isolated by the policies that protect the rights of my son. I support and respect his right to always have informed choice but this often impacts my ability to make an informed choice about how I can support him.

The other big issue is Continuity of Care in the public system. The result is inconsistent staff contact, medication changes, lapsed Community Treatment Orders with disastrous consequences for my son.

Over many years I have adapted to living in this parallel world which from the outside appears to have so many services. From the outside our health system provides care and choice for consumers but from the inside it is under extreme pressure and constricted by policy and procedures. It is difficult to find any practitioners let alone the right practitioners and hard to navigate the many layers in the system with more NGO's providing services than ever before.

Finally, because the law is interwoven with providing Mental Health care the police often become involved. This has always been traumatic for my son and his family. The inconsistent approach from every police interaction we have had needs to be addressed by training and education with oversight by mental health practitioners.

The police regularly find themselves in the very deep waters of a mental health crisis and I want to acknowledge that they have been my safety net. It is hard to be grateful for this as we are ALL traumatised by a mental health crisis.

Thank you for the opportunity to share the things I have learned along the way.