

Submission to Productivity Commission 3rd April 2019

I am writing this submission on behalf of myself, husband and family members to express the issues relating to the management of my son, in an episode where he was experiencing mental health issues. The management in the initial stages of his illness was not adequate to address his health requirements. Therefore the mental health episode escalated into a major catastrophic event in which my husband and I were victims of a major traumatic event.

A submission of complaint was made to the Western Sydney Local Health District relating to the care received at Bungaribee House, an accredited Acute Care Centre in a major NSW public Hospital. A RCA reported was submitted

My son had experienced mental health issues and I called the emergency number "000". My son was taken to Blacktown Hospital Emergency Department, where we believed he was to receive appropriate care for his medical needs, as well as management of his Type 1 insulin dependent diabetes. Our son was admitted to the Acute Care Ward, Bungaribee House.

On a Wednesday in 2015, the Mental Health Review Tribunal determined that the patient was no longer detainable under the Mental Health Act, and a deferred discharge date was organised on midday the next day.

The magistrate could not read the progress notes of our son. The hand writing was illegible. The documents were passed to the registrar and mental health staff and were unable to be analysed. The absence of the treating registrar - due to exam and the treating consultant – due to illness led the Magistrate to allow Blacktown Hospital 24 hours to write a report. My husband and I were the only people there who had attended the family meeting, which had taken place on Wednesday.

My husband and I were given an opportunity to speak at the tribunal and we both requested our son be detained for further treatment. My husband outlined his concerns regarding the cause of our son's mental health issues and clearly stated our son needed help and asked that the Magistrate order our son into compulsory rehabilitation.

The lack of documentation provided by the treating registrar or psychiatrist directly contributed to the decisions made by the Magistrate at the Medical Health Review Tribunal. The Magistrate requested a report within 24 hours of the Tribunal meeting. The contents of this report are not documented in this report.

My husband and I had received notification of our son's discharge at 1pm on Thursday.

My son's behaviour did not improve and follow up was not adequate. My husband accompanied our son to a follow up appointment at Bungaribee House three weeks later. About 2 hours subsequent this appointment the Psychiatrist telephoned my husband to say he thought our son was psychotic and a danger to himself and others.

The medical officer had the ability to admit our son to the Mental Health Unit but did not. The treating medical officer transferred the responsibility of our son's representation to the Mental Health Unit at Blacktown Hospital to us, his parents.

The call came at approximately 5:30 pm on a Friday afternoon. Our son was not in the care of his parents. The only way we could force our son to represent to Blacktown Hospital was through the calling of Police and Ambulance services. The medical officer placed the responsibility of a medical diagnosis and intervention into the responsibility of the parents.

Subsequent admission:

"The RCA team reviewed the treating team's assessment management risk of aggression given that the patient was taken to hospital for assessment after making threats to kill his father"

Comment: These threats do not appear to be taken seriously by the treating staff. The parents were advised by ambulance officers not to delete the threats. The seriousness of this threat appears to have been discounted by the attending medical staff.

The lack of support and respect given to the biological parents and family during the recent years led to the escalation of violence both parents experienced approximately a month and a half later. As the biological parents, we can only wonder if the intervention that was requested during the time of presentation to medical officers may have led to a different outcome than the one that occurred as the series of events documented in the report. We as parents feel that our input to the medical professionals regarding our son's mental health problems was almost entirely ignored.

The issues we have identified in the "lived experience" are listed below.

- As family members our concerns for our son were not considered
- Our son's age was used against us as he was an adult
- Our request for rehabilitation program was shunned by the fact "he has to agree". The Mental Health Act does not allow the person to be placed in involuntary rehab. Family members are reduced to using services which are not accredited, and costs outweigh the benefits.
- Overseas –Thailand – a third world country has Australian sports people receiving treatment but these services are not available to the people of Australia.
- Our son was making inappropriate decisions which escalated into the violent ; serious crimes.
- The inability of the Acute Mental Health Ward to provide accurate documentation
- The fact as parents we were not approached when the RCA report was being composed

- Our son was admitted to a Correctional Centre in remand while awaiting the legal process.
- At the time of our son's admission to the correctional centre, there were 2 other people who had been admitted to Bungarribee House at the same time he was an inpatient there. Further evidence of inadequate treatment.
- The Legal Aid officer "hid" behind the door of the Office and refused to talk to us as his parents.
- Financial Cost of \$75,000 to provide legal representation to ultimately provide our son with the best outcome.
- The fact our son was placed in corrections when Psychiatric assessments were in agreement he was experiencing mental health issues.
- When transferred to Mental Health Ward at the MRRC the visiting arrangements were the same as convicted criminals.
- Our son was found not guilty of the serious charges because of mental illness. However, he still remained in Corrections for 1 year waiting on a bed in the Forensic Hospital. A completely deplorable situation.
- There were no programmes in place to address any means of providing rehabilitation.
- The inadequacy of his Diabetes management led to his management of his Diabetes. Inappropriate meals times and lack of opportunity contributed to his excessive weight gain , which will place further burden on both his long term health and the Health System