

SUB. 3000.0001.0404

Individual Formal Submission to the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System

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My first experience of caring for my daughter was when she was in Year 11 and the teachers recognised that things were not quite right with my daughter.

This was 23 years ago and the signs seemed to be anger at certain times, which became out of control. However VCE came along and she excelled and scored a place at Melbourne Uni, but could not sustain the pace of uni and took a leave of absence.

She worked for a short period but her anger got in the way and was let go. I arranged for a psychiatrist at Albert Road Clinic, he was most interested in her behaviour but she would not go to the appointments so that stopped. She found a rented room in Northcote and left home and all was well for a while.

Moved from place to place, found bookkeeping job and they liked her and she was doing well. I got a telephone call around 11pm one evening to say she had called in to see the owner and his family which she had become friends with his same aged children and he asked me to come over urgently as she was most unwell. I did this and found her psychotic and my instincts immediately realised I must take her to hospital. The father and I took her to emergency where she was then admitted. This has been the start of long road of misdiagnosis, medications, and trauma within the family resulting from her trauma. Her travels to ██████████ to visit a family member resulted in police and admission to ██████████ hospital. The hospital had no idea what to do with her, which ended up me having the Chief Psychiatrist arranging an ambulance for her travel back to Melbourne to the Alfred.

The 15 years that followed were traumatic for everyone in and out of hospital, back home, out of home then back in hospital. BPD was an unknown diagnosis back then. At that time Spectrum had 15 beds but due to funding cuts were eventually reduced to 4. Now they do have any and yet many women and men suffer from BPD and are undiagnosed. Eventually thanks to Spectrum we all got Lucky.

Some positive experiences have been:

What worked was her Alfred Community Dr who was visiting my daughter on the ward asking another Dr who was from Spectrum and asking her to take a look at my daughter and the Spectrum Dr immediately noted that she her diagnosis was Borderline Personality Disorder as one of the symptoms of her illness. I thank her community Dr from the Alfred every day and Spectrum as they have guided the team with a Psychologist at each meeting to train us all how to manage my daughter. This diagnosis has changed the way we as a team view my personality with respect and has made it easier for my daughter to fit into her world.

The main issues have been:

I don't blame the system as they did their best under extremely difficult circumstances however medications got in the way as all they saw was Schizophrenia on discharge and I do think the team has been working so hard to address this very difficult mental illness that BPD was never on the radar until her Community Dr from the Alfred raised the concern with the Spectrum Dr while on the ward.

Recommendations & changes I wish to see come out of the royal commission:

I would like to see Drs Think outside the box, look at BPD as it often interfaces with another diagnosis. Medications for mental illness are difficult to work with and need expert knowledge as often they interact with glutamate.

I would like to see the Alfred/Monash Women's research centre at St Kilda Road take a part in diagnosis of difficult patients and perhaps be part of a problem solving team when difficult patient who have the revolving door syndrome emerge. I would like to see Spectrum take a leading part in diagnosis within the Public Hospitals and perhaps this would save many patients' lives as many patients commit suicide. Spectrum have a very small budget and perhaps this could be increased, many patients are not diagnosed with BPD and treated with the wrong medication as it's easy this way. Many Drs don't take BPD seriously.