

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: OFFICIAL: Thanks for your email to the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System

[REDACTED]

Thank you for your reply. Yes, please feel free to use my family's story for the Royal Commission.

Regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** Royal Commission Victoria Mental Health System ([REDACTED])  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Mental Health Royal Commission - My Family's Story

Dear [REDACTED]

I recently read an article in the Whitehorse Leader about the royal commission into mental health and wanted to share my family's story. In the last week I have also written to both Minister Greg Hunt and Minister Martin Foley. The account below is just a brief snapshot of what we have had to deal with in the last week.

My brother is an alcoholic and has mental health issues due to an underlying issue. The issue being that he was sexually abused by his school principal when he was 10 years old at a boys catholic school in [REDACTED] Melbourne. He's now 42.

On Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> May 2019, he tried to o/d on prescription medicine (not the first time), was not responsive when my mum entered his house, a neighbour who is a nurse aided but he had a very weak pulse. Ambulance, police and fire brigade arrived and the medics commenced cpr. He was taken to hospital around 9:30pm

that evening and was later discharged at around 11:30pm. Then the next morning, a drug and alcohol counsellor, police and un-uniformed mental health police assistants arrived along with the ambulance. He was taken to hospital again and the drug and alcohol counsellor pleaded with hospital staff to transfer him to psychiatric ward. He was discharged a few hours later. That very same evening, he was taken to hospital again, causing a scene in the emergency waiting area and still no transfer to psychiatric ward. He was given a bed in emergency for the night to sober up but was free to go early the next morning. However, this time the drug and alcohol counsellor arrived in time to convince my brother to go to detox and to convince the hospital staff to allow him to stay another day as he was able to arrange an alcohol detox stay the next morning for the next week.

So off he went to detox on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2019 and my parents and the rest of the family were able to get some well-earned rest and peace of mind while he was in care. Although this was very short lived as we later found out that he requested to leave the centre on Saturday morning. The family were unaware of this. So again, the aggressive, psychotic and alcohol fuelled episodes started again on Sunday and my elderly parents who live next door to him had to contend with him yet again. They are exhausted and the rest of the family exhausted. What on earth do we need to do to get him into psychiatric care? This scenario is all too common for way too many families. The system is rotten to the core and there is nothing anyone can do to help unless we fork out thousands of dollars for private rehab.

When are the governments going to acknowledge that the mental health system needs major reform and involuntary admission should be allowed so that the families affected by this can get some peace of mind that they're getting the right care. We are a normal hard working family. We're not bums, we're professionals and have good morals. Mental health affects all walks of life. We are a family torn apart and we have had enough of him and his destructive ways.

My migrant Italian parents despite being tired and worn will never throw him out on the street. You see, the house my brother lives in next door to my parents, is an investment property that provided rental income for my parents in their retirement. My brother lives there free of charge because he doesn't have a cent to his name. Adding to the mix, my brother is also chronic gambler and what money he had left after gambling he used to pay some gambling debts. He's also applied for easy to obtain personal loans, which gave him another avenue to keep up the gambling. Needless to say he won nothing so now he is faced with more than \$8,000 in loan repayments which can't pay back, because he has no money.

My brother's wife left him when their daughter was 3 months old (she is now 2½). His wife is now a single mother living with her parents because she needs mental and financial support. Two years ago my brother lost his licence for drink driving for 4 years because he lost it twice prior. He had a descent job as an account salesman but had to resign because he needed a licence. He got a job via a friend at a retail store but he has been a terrible employee and has let his team down on several occasions. On Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> May he went back to work after more than 3 months off because of his destructive ways. His HR have not sacked him and he returned to work under

strict conditions. He lasted 3 days now he's back to going back and forward to hospital.

Today he's on another path to destruction and causing great concern for my parents who can no longer deal with him. Our family keeps getting told that he needs alcohol rehab however his issues are far deeper, which has caused his mental health issues. When he drinks he is not in a position to think clearly or make rational decisions. Although, even when he's sober his mental state is not great and he just lives to exist and not vice versa. He talks rubbish and is unbearable to have a conversation with.

In the past we have tried to get him psychiatric assistance and psychologist referrals. He has seen many however his habitual lying to these practitioners has resulted in not being able to assist him nor make a proper diagnosis. The closest we came to a diagnosis was that he had complex post-traumatic stress disorder due to the sexual abuse.

My family and I have endured this suffering of dealing with a mentally ill family member for more than 10 years and we're tired. Sick and tired of a system that turns us away. My brother needs help. He needs to be hospitalised and rehabilitated. He needs to be in supervised medical care for as long as required until he can function again. He needs to be stripped of his rights so he doesn't discharge himself when admitted to hospital or care. He doesn't think or function properly so he shouldn't be able to say what's best for him, yet we have a system which says he's an adult so he is free to make the decisions. My parents have power of attorney over him but apparently this is not enough to keep him in hospital. They need medical power of attorney which needs to go through a psychiatrist and the courts, however he doesn't have the funds to see a psychiatrist. My parents should have the last say not him and should have the right to demand that in this so called lucky country, he get admitted to hospital and not be discharged until he has been rehabilitated. There should not be a time limit on it, it should be for as long as he needs until he's ready to integrate back into society.

What I have mentioned above is only a snapshot in the day of a life of a family living with a mentally ill family member. Thank you for taking the time to read some of my family's story.

Sincerely,

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[REDACTED]