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My son, who I would prefer not to be named in this submission, is 32 years old and has been addicted to heroin and ice since he was 15 years old. In that time, he's been to prison three times. In just the last three months he was resuscitated by paramedics, without my knowledge. The woman who was notified, also needed to be resuscitated.

The Royal Commission needs to understand that the way the system is structured causes more distress to everyone when families are excluded from the basic information. There needs to be someone else who's called.

The Commission needs to understand that when someone is effected by drugs, and acute mental illness, providing them with large amounts of medication, and sending them back out into the community, puts a great strain on families and does nothing to improve their conditions. It makes matters worse.

At times, my son was given the wrong medication, it had terrible side effects, and has made my son resistant to seeking more treatment. It feels as though he's given these powerful medications in order to cause less trouble to the hospital staff. Other times, it feels as though the hospitals roll their eyes because he's a drug user.

There needs to be a dedicated place for people to go, even if they don't want it, to help them get better, and to protect those around them. Right now, families are taking on so much burden, and it's not assisting people to build a better life.

My son has attempted to take his own life, informing me that twice he's over dosed in order to end his suffering. When he does go to the hospital, he feels judged, and this too makes matters worse. The staff in hospitals often look down on him, because he's a drug user.

When people come out of prison, there's nothing to help people detox or rehabilitate. People need to be mandated to complete drug or alcohol rehab as a condition of leaving prison.

The system will only assist you if you're in a crisis, and regularly, the ways it does respond to the crisis, make it worse.

Another profound challenges is the amount of information you can get, and are entitled to, as a parent. Constantly, I am told that I am unable to receive basic and important information, due to the privacy.

He's been homeless, sleeping in his car, but now he's lost that. He claims he is happier being homeless. But this is clearly not a long term solution, and I want the Royal Commission to know that people need safe housing or accomodation, where they can be supported to treat both addictions and mental illness.

For me, the impact has been life shattering. I've been unable to even talk about it with my wider family, everyone has an opinion, and many of them are hurtful, as they just don't understand the scale of the challenge.

People look upon me as a failure, despite giving everything I can to helping him have a better life. I believe I am suffering post traumatic stress due to this. I have felt very lonely and isolated in this struggle, until I found the peer group at ACSO.

I have received a lot of counselling, but the thing that's supported me the most is the peer group.

Working at ACSO has made me realise that I am not alone, and that there are many people in similar situations, mostly older women, look after people with addiction.

