



## WITNESS STATEMENT OF GRANT TODD

I, Grant Todd,<sup>1</sup> say as follows:

- 1 I make this statement on the basis of my own knowledge, except where otherwise stated. Where I make statements based on information provided by others, I believe that information to be true.
- 2 I was using drugs since I was 12 years old and had drug induced psychosis since I was 16. Marijuana was my drug of choice and I was a heavy pot smoker but I spent a lot on Ice, pills, Ketamine – anything I could get. I have been diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder, which is a mixture of bipolar and schizophrenia.
- 3 My statement covers my experience of Victoria's mental health system, including before and after I was found not guilty of an offence because of mental impairment.

### Experience of the mental health system prior to the offence

- 4 Prior to my offence I had been admitted as an inpatient at a mental health facility three or four times. I was on a community treatment order but was becoming more and more unwell. I was seeing a psychiatrist and was on medication. I was experiencing delusions and hearing voices.

### Thomas Embling Hospital

- 5 After I was charged for causing the death of another person, I was found not guilty because of mental impairment and was sent to Melbourne Assessment Prison for around seven days, before being moved to Thomas Embling Hospital (**Thomas Embling**).
- 6 When I arrived at Thomas Embling, I think they could see how unwell I was, and I was placed on medication to help with my delusions. It took some time to find the right medication.
- 7 I had a lot of therapy at Thomas Embling, including group therapy. I had one on one psychology sessions, and while at the acute unit I took anger management sessions. I also did a drug and alcohol group. Some people have to complete the 'offending group' therapy session but I missed this session. Instead, my psychologist asked me to go away and make a pie chart of everything that contributed to my offence. For me, it was a

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<sup>1</sup> The name and details of the witness referred to in this statement have been changed to protect their identities.

relationship breakdown, losing contact with my family, self-medicating with drugs, my mental illness and my mood disorder. I did all the percentages on the chart and took it back to my psychologist and his feedback was that I didn't need the group therapy because I knew exactly why I had offended. I took something away from that – when I am well, I have a lot of insight.

- 8 The good thing about Thomas Embling is that they make sure you are 100 per cent on top of your life before you are granted extended leave. I was a busy person when I was there.
- 9 However, my time at Thomas Embling wasn't all positive. I experienced side effects from one of the medications which affected my behaviour. In my view, this meant that I had to stay at Thomas Embling for longer than I should have.
- 10 I haven't relapsed since getting well at Thomas Embling. I was initially granted extended leave from Thomas Embling. I am now on a non-custodial supervision order.

### **My life now**

- 11 I receive support and treatment in the community. I am still on medication and see a psychiatrist and case manager. I am well supported in the community and have a good National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) package. I have a cleaner and someone who comes to take me out for coffee three times a week. I also attend singing lessons. I have a partner and we are hoping to start a family soon.
- 12 It took me a while to get a decent NDIS package. They thought I had an acquired brain injury so for my first plan I was only given a travel allowance. I had to put in a request for a review and it wasn't until my second plan that my supports increased to what they are now.
- 13 I'm finding it difficult to get a job because of my offending. A finding of 'not guilty because of mental impairment' seems worse than a guilty verdict because not only do I have the offending behaviour to deal with, but I've got the mental health issues as well so it seems that suddenly people think I am unpredictable.
- 14 It is really unfortunate but it took something really tragic to happen for me to change my life. If I didn't go to Thomas Embling I don't think anything would have changed for me. I would have kept going around in cycles of addiction.

### **Recommendations**

- 15 There needs to be better education about mental health. It should be taught as a subject in schools.

- 16 There needs to be more funding for mental health services. In my view, there is a vast difference between community services and the forensic system. I understand that community workers have caseloads of between 30 and 40 people. It must be hard for them to stay on top of all their patients, and I'm sure their appointments aren't frequent enough. There needs to be more funding for case managers, and infrastructure and mental health services in the community.
- 17 It would be great if there was a place like Thomas Embling in the community. I'm not saying people should be forced into doing anything but somewhere that could just allow for and advocate more support for people, especially if someone is new to their illness or has recently been diagnosed.

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