

National Human Rights Consultation Submission

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Name: Owen Williams

Submission Text:

I am going to outline some of my views in the context of things I have personally experienced, in order to hopefully improve future treatment given the same circumstances again. I will divide my thoughts into sections (with numbers) based on the boxes I ticked above.

1) Disability Discrimination - I have a disability as defined in the Disability Discrimination Act 1992, that means that I don't have any exposure to sunlight. I believe this causes me skin problems. I had severe 'acne' / 'photodermatitis?' that improved quite a lot when I no longer had any sun exposure. As many businesses operate during the daytime hours only, I have been disadvantaged from receiving the full scope of services that society provides. This is an area which could definitely do with some improvement, especially in a country like Australia (where there are Caucasians and a harsh sun which makes Australia the melanoma capital of the world), for the sake of people's health. I have found that access to a full range of services after dark is not possible, and this further worsens the psychological aspect of the disability, to add further stress and anxiety to the situation.

2) Health - I feel that too much weight is given to the "appropriately qualified medical practitioners" opinions, and not enough weight is given to what the patients' opinions. This imbalance causes problems in that "appropriately qualified medical practitioners" can go around saying anything they think is right, is right, and what a patient says that is contrary to what they say is right, is therefore wrong. This does nothing to assist the health and well-being of a patient, and I would like to point out that this imbalance is of concern to me, as I thought that "appropriately qualified medical practitioners" are there to assist with the best health and well-being of the patients, and not to feel like they are never wrong, or that patients' opinions don't matter. I also feel that "appropriately qualified medical practitioners" are often bound within the knowledge of their training, and can make mistakes, which may not get admitted and this concerns me as a patient, because it means that I might not be getting accurate or true advice. I also feel that the pharmaceutical industry has too many conflicts of interest with doctors to provide the proper and true information to assist "appropriately qualified medical practitioners" to guide the patients towards their best health and well-being.

3) Homelessness and Poverty - I feel that new laws should be enacted in Australia that prevent people from being able to be "kicked out" of where they are staying, without going through the court system, or some other conciliation system of competent jurisdiction. From what I understand, in some places in America, this may be the case - even if a person's name is not on a lease, they can not be kicked out unless it goes through the court system. I believe this would be of great benefit to people that find themselves with nowhere to go without appropriate prior warning, and could also prevent some abuse of power from taking place.

4) Treatment of people who are arrested or detained - I refer to the Mental Health Act (SA), current as of 26-02-2009. Apparently, all it takes is a psychiatrist's 'opinion' about something to get someone detained. This is totally wrong, as people's opinions can be wrong and also biased. Potential biases include training biases (in that only things that get taught to the psychiatrists are believed by the psychiatrists), financial biases (it is in the financial interest of psychiatrists to detain people for 'treatment'), et cetera... This law does nothing to enhance equality within society, it values a psychiatrist's opinion (a single opinion from a human being who makes mistakes) over a patient's opinion. This is not equality, and is definitely a Human Rights issue.