

**Transcript of Presentation**  
**by Ingrid Ozols, MHCA Executive Member and Consumer**  
**at the National Launch of the “Not for Service” Report**  
**Wednesday, 19 October 2005**

I live and manage life with what at times is severe reoccurring depression and anxiety. My late mother lived with bipolar disorder. Too many Australians live with some form of mental illness, and for many appropriate treatment is a forlorn hope.

Mental illnesses are psychological and intense emotional prisons. A crisis of oneself that strikes at the soul, at one's very being, impacting on every dimension of a person's life.

“Not for Service” is an anthology. A chronicle of sad and tragic experiences for those with mental health problems, and I would like to take the time to thank them for their courage – for standing up in their hundreds around the country to share their sadness and their tragedies. And these are being repeated in too many Australian homes, representing someone we all know, we all love or care about – ultimately about you and me. They tell of a system that can't cope; that doesn't know how to cope; that is overburdened and under-resourced. And “Not for Service” also highlights there is still stigma.

The human kindness and support, flowers and chocolates, that come when someone is diagnosed with a physical condition like cancer and heart disease, is sadly absent for conditions of the mind and the very essence of our being. Why?

During my life's journey there have been occasions I have wanted to die. And yes, I have tried to do just that. Sadly, many people in my position have taken the ultimate choice and ended their lives. But my story is a positive one. I have had great mental health care and today I live and contribute to society. However, as “Not for Service” illustrates, I am in the minority.

Thank you to Dr Sev Ozdowski, Professor Ian Hickie, Dr Grace Groom, John Mendoza, the Mental Health Council of Australia, the Brain and Mind Institute, and HREOC, for their enormous work to bring the magnitude of despair that is written in “Not for Service” and the voices that come from “Not for Service” into the public arena. It is hard to ignore. It isn’t light reading.

My hope is that it awakens our social conscience and moves us into constructive action. We need to look within ourselves and take responsibility for the state of the mental health system we find ourselves in, and the attitudes we hold towards mental illnesses. We have a duty of care and it is no longer adequate to accept that it is not our business, that it is not our place to interfere. It is our business – it is our responsibility to reach out and nurture this vulnerable group of people. They can’t get well on their own.

Every one of us has the right to good quality mental health care in this country. Healing and recovery is more likely in an environment of optimism and hope, in an integrated system where everyone is working together. We may not be able to fix the broken families who searched in vain for help; whose tears stain page after page of “Not for Service”. But at the very least, if “Not for Service” can be a catalyst for change, then we will give the pain of so many Australians purpose and meaning.

I urge the Health Minister, our Federal Governments, and our State Governments, to listen and take action from “Not for Service” rather than just file it away to gather dust. Help us to live in a society where people’s vulnerabilities are acknowledged and cared for. It is through adversity that the human spirit shines. For the sake of our lives, for the sake of our humanity, and that of our children, and our children’s children - let this be one of those occasions that our famous Aussie spirit gets up and steps up and gives everyone a fair go at life.

Thank you.