

Barrett family members and I met with the Queensland Mental Health Commissioner and took the opportunity to express a range of serious concerns, including:

- a clear lack of consultation with patients, families and the community throughout the process undertaken since the possibility of closure was leaked last November
- the lack of clarity on the future (what IS the model that the current patients and others have access to in years to come?)
- the impact on the current patients who are already at high risk of being destabilised (amongst other things, treatment staff has been in flux as destabilised all the current patients and the lack of future only heightens anxiety)

We stressed to Dr van Schoubroeck how effective the Barrett Centre has been over the past 30 years in helping young people with severe mental health issues and indicated that frequently stated concerns that Barrett was not a 'contemporary' model were seen as irrelevant to all who have seen and felt the ways that the centre can positively affect lives. We also made it clear that those who support Barrett were not simply people resisting change or a group who didn't welcome a new and extended range of treatment opportunities but people who understood that a relocation may be required for particular reasons but who only wanted the best range of mental healthcare options available for young people across the state. And that to not keep the Barrett Centre alive within that range is to deny care to a group of young people whose suffering is extremely severe.

The Barrett family members continually stressed the need for the centre to remain as it is until a future model is up and running. They indicated that serious issues currently exist and could worsen if young people are moved to other healthcare options without adequate preparation and a comprehensive understanding of their individual needs. So we asked the Commissioner if she knew if there was any flexibility regarding the government's stated early 2014 closure of Barrett at Wacol. The Commissioner couldn't speak equivocally on that but said that she believed that the process that was underway had been planned for some time and was unlikely to be able to be altered. But she passed on that she had spoken to a Health Department representative who had assured her that the current patients would be cared for through the transition. We stressed the importance for any alteration in the *current* service to be delayed for the welfare of the current patients who are already anxious due to staff changes and lack of clarity about their future care.

The Commissioner acknowledged the concerns we expressed and indicated that her role was only just beginning and that the Commission would be undertaking a range of consultations and processes to achieve a better system to promote mental health and wellbeing and minimise substance misuse in Queensland. The views of consumers, their families and carers will be critical in that process.

While Dr van Schoubroeck could not comment on the adequacy of the consultation with families, she accepted that in their view it was not sufficient and their concerns had not been accommodated.

We indicated that many Barrett families and supporters felt that they had waited for an extended period already while the Expert Clinical Reference Group met and presented its recommendations so were concerned about more committees and

EXHIBIT 205

advisory groups being set up when the experts had already reached conclusions on this issue – that extended inpatient care with onsite schooling is essential. The Commissioner indicated that she has the ECRG report but is still to have the opportunity to read it fully.

We are grateful that Dr van Schoubroeck took the time to listen to the very real concerns of those who support the Barrett Centre. She appreciates that families only want what is best for their children.

She will relay these concerns to the Health Minister and to the decision makers in Queensland Health. However she is reluctant to engage in public debate as she is very concerned about the potential impact of this on the young people who are currently at the Centre as well as their families and friends.