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## Mental health outrage – hospital blocks visits

“Health Department psychiatrists are beyond the control of the courts and normal public expectations in blocking visitors to the locked hospitals. They admit they have no stated policy and don’t need to offer a reason. No prison system would consider it. We call for Minister Kevin Humphries to intervene” said Justice Action Coordinator Brett Collins.

“This week a two year blockage continued despite written approval from hospital boss Dr Adrian Keller. A ward clerk said no visit would be permitted. It needed to be considered by a previously unstated review team. Previous blocks have included the man’s friends who are studying law and social work, psychiatrists and lawyers. We have a log running over two years. The professionals’ blockages were stated to be mistakes” said Mr Collins.

“It has been an ongoing and exhausting process trying to visit our friend in the forensic hospital, with still no conclusion. We just want to give him the support that he needs and is entitled to” said Justice Action caseworker Dani.

“A visit to hospital by concerned friends in the absence of family is one of the most sacred gifts of caring. It lifts the spirits of those who are sick making them feel loved. In a locked hospital where you can’t leave, it is even more important in reducing the isolation and getting them well” said Mr Collins.

“Social support is accepted as the primary answer to mental illness. It was the whole basis of the deinstitutionalisation of the old mental asylums of Callan Park and Gladesville, saving millions of dollars. But the extension of the principle into the psychiatrists’ playpen of mental hospitals, bringing accountability is very different” said Mr Collins.

“The law defines the limits of the Health Department powers as the ‘least restrictive environment’, but with this particular patient whose voice has become a call for attention to a sick system, that is a joke. Even his identity and voice is blocked, currently awaiting a Supreme Court decision. Despite being a non-violent person he is forcibly injected every two weeks, has been held for over 9 years of an indefinite period, for a harm he never intended. He would not have incurred that penalty if he had acted maliciously. We stand beside him as his Primary Carer and looking at the failed system that costs \$200,000 each patient each year” said Mr Collins.

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