

Lake Alice NZ Inquiry Hears of Child Rapes; Sexual Abuse Continued in Australia

14-year-old girl tells Inquiry she was drugged, electroshocked and allegedly raped by psychiatrist in NZ; authorities ignored her pleas.

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- A Royal Commission Inquiry into child abuse at the Lake Alice psychiatric hospital in New Zealand has recently sat through a week of heart-wrenching testimony of children that were repeatedly tortured with electroshock to their heads and genitals before the facility was shut down. They were also sexually assaulted by nurses, staff and adult patients. Sharyn Collis told the inquiry that the chief psychiatrist also raped her when she was 14 and sent to Lake Alice in 1973. Staff and authorities let him get away with it, she alleged.[1] He moved to Melbourne, Australia in 1978, where his patients were also sexually abused.



14-year-old girl tells Inquiry she was drugged, electroshocked and allegedly raped by psychiatrist in NZ; authorities ignored her pleas. Never prosecuted, the psychiatrist moved to Australia, where he continued to practice and sexually assault patients, CCHR, reports.

The Royal Commission chair, Judge Coral Shaw, praised the [Citizens Commission on Human](#)

[Rights \(CCHR\)](#), a mental health watchdog, as “heroes” in the 45-year battle for justice for the Lake Alice victims. Chapters of the group in NZ, Australia and the United States have fought for recognition of the abuses, helping enable former patients like Collis to be heard today.[2]

“

Other staff members also need to be held accountable. It's about getting justice for what happened to us and our families.”

Sharyn Collis

Collis, now 62, said that after the psychiatrist subjected her to electroshock, she was certain he sexually assaulted her. The now deregistered psychiatrist, aged 92, living in Melbourne, Australia, “would take me into a side room, get

the nurses to tie me down with leather straps and give me a needle of drugs to put me to sleep," she testified. It happened many times. She continued being electroshocked between March 1973 and April 1974.

When she complained to staff, as many other former patients have also testified, staff told her that she was lying. The doctor moved to Melbourne in 1978 and, within a year, started sexually abusing a patient until 1980. However, that would not be made public for another 27 years in 2006, when he resigned his license just before an Australian court ordered him to pay \$55,000 in damages for sexually abusing a former patient. Judge Jim Duggan said at the time of the verdict: "I conclude that a senior and well-credentialed psychiatrist took advantage of the vulnerability of a disturbed psychiatric patient for the purposes of sexual gratification." [3]

In 2003, Victorian police were investigating claims made by former Lake Alice patients concerned that the doctor was still practicing. Australian media reported that the psychiatrist "who oversaw the punishment of children with electric-shock therapy at a New Zealand hospital" could be struck off after the Medical Practitioners Board of Victoria. [4] But the matter dragged on for another three years.

The Royal Commission has heard that the psychiatrist had created a culture of violence, assault, rape and torture in the child and adolescent ward before it was shut down, following a magisterial inquiry that CCHR obtained. [5]

However, the victims want to see government recognition that what was done to them was "torture," as the United Nations Committee on Torture indicated in 2019. Collis adds: "Other staff members also need to be held accountable. It's about getting justice for what happened to us and our families."

CCHR wants to see legislative protections in NZ and worldwide that compel staff and professionals to report abusive treatment in the mental health field or face culpability themselves. The group also wants to see electroshock prohibited on minors, similar to the Western Australian Mental Health Act that bans its use on children aged up to 12, with criminal penalties if administered them. [6]

It says the NZ inquiry is timely as the World Health Organization released guidelines on June 10 calling for an end to coercive psychiatric practices, including forced treatment such as electroshock, which uses up to 460 volts of electricity to cause a grand mal seizure that can result in memory loss and brain damage. [7]

CCHR, which in Australia, was also instrumental in getting deep sleep treatment (DST)—electroshock combined with a cocktail of psychotropic drugs—banned, [8] has been responsible for obtaining more than 190 laws worldwide to provide protections for patients in the mental health system. Headquartered in Los Angeles, CCHR International is monitoring the evidence and outcome of the NZ inquiry. They say it is similar to the NSW Royal Commission into

DST (1988-90), in that it is investigating successive government and professional college inaction over a dangerous psychiatric practice.

[Read full article here.](#)

[1] Andrew McRae, "Lake Alice abuse: Former patient accuses Dr Selwyn Leeks of rape," Radio NZ, 18 June 2021, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/445067/lake-alice-abuse-former-patient-accuses-dr-selwyn-leeks-of-rape>; Andrew McRae, "Lake Alice ECT abuse: Calls for Dr Selwyn Leeks to face justice," Radio NZ, 16 June 2021, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/444881/lake-alice-ect-abuse-calls-for-dr-selwyn-leeks-to-face-justice>

[2] "Church of Scientology has been investigating Lake Alice for almost half a century," Stuff NZ, 17 June 2021, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/300334130/church-of-scientology-has-been-investigating-lake-alice-for-almost-half-a-century>

[3] Phillip Hickey, Ph.D., "Torture at Lake Alice 'Hospital,' New Zealand," Behaviorism and Mental Health, 2 Mar. 2021, <https://www.behaviorismandmentalhealth.com/2021/03/02/torture-at-lake-alice-hospital-new-zealand/>

[4] "Probe on shock doctor claims," The Age, 11 July 2003, <https://www.theage.com.au/national/probe-on-shock-doctor-claims-20030711-gdw0ze.html>

[5] "'Prove it': Lake Alice survivor after bombshell: Psychiatrist who gave electric shocks to children in the 1970s 'incapable' of responding to Royal Commission. David Williams reports," Newsroom, 15 June 2021, <https://www.newsroom.co.nz/prove-it-lake-alice-survivor-after-bombshell>

[6] <https://cchr.org.au/no-parental-consent-needed-for-electroshock-of-nsw-children> citing Western Australia Mental Health Act 2014, S 194, p. 145; Australian Capital Territory Mental Health Act 2015, S 147, p. 178.

[7] https://www.cchr.int.org/2021/06/11/world-health-organization-new-guidelines-are-vital-to-end-coercive-psychiatric-practices-abuse/#_edn1, "Guidance on Community Mental Health Services: Promoting Person-Centered and Rights-Based Approaches," World Health Organization, 10 June 2021, p. 8, <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240025707> (to download report)

[8] <https://cchr.org.au/deadly-deep-sleep-treatment>

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