

SUBMITTED
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Submission to the National Children's Commission Enquiry into Childhood Self Harm

In [redacted] my 16-year-old son [redacted] took his own life. He was my only child.

[redacted] was a bright young man, a good student and sportsman.

For about 2 1/2 year prior to his death [redacted] had been receiving treatment for severe acne from [redacted] a paediatrician and dermatologist. The treatment prescribed by [redacted] was the drug Roaccutane.

Following commencement of this treatment [redacted] behaviour began to change. He became very angry and aggressive. He was also increasingly socially isolated and reduced his sporting activities

When reading about Roaccutane I noted that depression and suicide were possible side-effects of this medication. I repeatedly raised his change in behaviour with [redacted] who denied Roaccutane was the cause of these symptoms.

I was also horrified to read that Roaccutane was first developed as a cancer drug this seemed to be a very powerful drug to be given to normal healthy young people.

[redacted] behaviour became so alarming I sought treatment from two psychologists and finally 11 months after he commenced treatment with Roaccutane I sought treatment for him from a psychiatrist [redacted]. I also raised my concerns about Roaccutane with the psychiatrist who explained that he knew nothing of the drug and he consulted with [redacted]. I was subsequently told by [redacted] that [redacted] assured him there was no connection between Roaccutane and [redacted] behaviour.

Following [redacted] death I made two submissions to the Victorian coroner and subsequently received a copy of the coroner's report.

I also made my own enquiries regarding Roaccutane and was alarmed to discover that whilst information pamphlets contained in the Roaccutane box purchased here in Australia made no mention of anger and aggression as side-effects of using this medication, leaflets published in the United States in 2002 by order of the US Food and Drug administration warned of the side-effects. Further research on the Internet revealed that there were a number of legal actions being taken against the manufacturer and that there was great concern about the potential psychological side-effects of this drug.

I firmly believe that the use of Roaccutane contributed to my son [redacted] problems with mental health and ultimately to his suicide.

