

To whom it may concern,

For approximately 20 years, I was a solicitor employed at the Mental Health Legal Centre. During this time, I acted for many women clients who complained of the abuse that they suffered at the hands of male patients and staff in psychiatric hospitals. Because of the continuing abuse of women in these institutions and the general silence surrounding the dangers to women in mixed sex wards, the Mental Health Legal Centre held a public forum regarding women's rights to safety in psychiatric hospitals at Melbourne Town Hall on 5 October 2004. **(Mental Health Legal Centre Women's Only Psychiatric Wards forum)**

Although there have been some changes to psychiatric wards to improve the safety of women such as women only corridors and women's lounges, these changes do not address the fundamental problem of having mixed sex wards. The *Impatient* project has a long track record of bringing these fundamental abuses of the rights of women psychiatric patients to the public's attention. They should be strongly supported to continue their valuable work.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Shalit

**To download a full transcript of proceedings of the Mental Health Legal Centre Women's Only Psychiatric Wards forum 2004, including questions from the floor and Appendices, go to:**

**The Resources / Documents page on the [Impatient.org.au](http://Impatient.org.au) website and choose "Women's Only Psychiatric Wards Forum"**