



Children of Parents With a Mental Illness

Entertainment, Social Affairs, Education, Health, Youth Reporters

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NEW FILM EXPOSES LIFE FOR SOME

Children Of Parents with a Mental Illness (COPMI) has today applauded aspects of a new film that focuses on the life of a child whose parent has a mental illness. Jonathan Caouette's courageous documentary "Tarnation" provides a glimpse of life as it's rarely seen.

Like many people in his position Caouette fears for his own sanity and he struggles with his very strong sense of responsibility for his mentally ill mother. He grows up as best he can with minimal supports, knowing that their bond will not break no matter how ill she becomes.

The film is at times harrowing yet Caouette's quirky sense of humour, his evident love for his mother and his resilience as he gets on with his own life and establishes a loving relationship with his partner are also reflected in the film.

"I believe many people will be able to engage with the honesty in this film. For some the images and thoughts portrayed will be all too recognizable from their own role as carers for their mentally ill parents", says Elizabeth Fudge, COPMI Project Manager.

Home life isn't always easy for families when one parent has a mental illness and Caouette reveals aspects that many families keep hidden for fear of rejection or ridicule and the ultimate fear of being separated.

Having a parent with a mental illness doesn't always mean that a child will be adversely affected. However for some families like Jonathan's, the difficulties are compounded by other life experiences such as marriage breakdown, violence, poverty and in his case, child abuse and a dysfunctional extended family.

This film serves as a reminder that over 27,000 children in Australia alone are affected by their mother's psychosis (and many more by their fathers'). Other forms of parental mental illness add to the already high figures, yet we rarely hear about these children.

COPMI is a national project promoting better outcomes for children with a parent with a mental illness. COPMI's website provides information for the people who care for these kids – health professionals, social workers, neighbours, teachers, and coaches and contains downloadable booklets for family and friends. The information raises awareness, and helps people identify and respond to children and their families.

For media, COPMI can provide expert comment on the issue of children and mental illness, including case studies of young people and their families. More information on COPMI at www.copmi.net.au

'Tarnation' is on national release with Dendy Films www.dendyfilms.com.au/tarnation.html

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The national Children Of Parents with a Mental Illness (COPMI) initiative is being undertaken by the Australian Infant Child Adolescent and Family Mental Health Association (AICAFMHA) for the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.