



An Awkward Fit:

A Mother's Story of her son's struggles with mental illness, his suicide & coping with grief after his death

by Rita Riedel

How do you cope when your child dies by suicide? Why was Stephen different, and why did it lead to this? Mother and author Helen Maczkowiack visited Alice Springs on 21 July to give a 1-hour community talk about her son's life, and how she gradually came to face life again after his death. Following Stephen's suicide and then finding personal notes left in a journal, Helen felt compelled to write 'their story,' in the hope it will benefit others who may know or work with young people similarly experiencing confusion in difficult times.

Sponsored by MHACA and Mental Health Carers NT, approximately 20 people attended Helen's talk about her son's struggles and life after his death. I personally found her honest and heartfelt presentation both moving and insightful. Helen raised courageous questions such as, 'Would I have been able to recognise some of his warning signs if I'd been more aware? Would I have responded differently? Can we as family and friends make a difference? The answer in all instances was 'Yes'.

Stephen's diaries and Helen's unflinching honesty will touch all readers and offer comfort and insight to those affected by depression and other related illnesses. Helen's book "An Awkward Fit" will be invaluable to:

- ◆ people in supportive roles in schools—eg. counsellors, teachers and support workers—as part of their developing understanding of children with talents but who don't quite fit in or gain peer acceptance
- ◆ people in supportive roles with older adolescents and young adults
- ◆ people providing direct services to individuals facing some of the very complex multiple issues that Stephen faced;
- ◆ to offer comfort and provide knowledge to parents. ✘



Helen giving a talk at the Alice Springs Town Council

MHACA has a few copies available for \$20 - call Rita on 8950 4613. An Awkward Fit is also avail. for \$24.95 from www.helenmaczkowiack.com



sane Australia

SANE Australia offers a wide range of resources on suicide prevention. *The SANE Guide to Staying Alive* is a resource for people

with a mental illness who feel suicidal at times, developed with the aid of those who know first-hand what this is like, as well as health professionals and carers. The Guide contains tips on recognising early signs of becoming suicidal, information on where and how to access help, and what you can do yourself to reduce the risk.

**Contact SANE on 1800 18 SANE (7263)
www.sane.org**

