

# 2019 Submission - Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System

## Organisation Name

N/A

## Name

Mrs Elaine Dicalfas-Hall

## What are your suggestions to improve the Victorian community's understanding of mental illness and reduce stigma and discrimination?

"Education Inclusion of people with mental illness in community groups, supported if necessary"

## What is already working well and what can be done better to prevent mental illness and to support people to get early treatment and support?

"I would not encourage people to get 'early support and treatment' because i feel that the 'treatment' results in so much further trauma and dehumanisation, in an ever downward spiral. Were there a guarantee of safety and dignity maybe things would be different. I could only suggest looking at countries who have a better approach than Australia and trying to learn from them."

## What is already working well and what can be done better to prevent suicide?

"From my perspective nothing is working well, because my brother is dead because of this system's failures. The things which I would suggest to prevent suicide are as follows: 1. Not using medication as a stand alone treatment. 2. More funding for wholistic / social programs which improve quality of life and connection. 3. Adequately monitoring people after medication changes. 4. Not discharging people who are very unwell into an unsupported environment. 5. More supported living options for people when they need them, like The Haven in melb. 6. Provision of psychotherapy to deal with underlying issues as well as develop coping strategies for difficult areas. 7. Selection of suitable housing placements (ie not next door to substance abusers) 8. More avenues for information sharing fro family members and subsequent treatment teams. 9. Elimination of involuntary admissions, forced medication, assault and abuse in psych wards and from Police officers. These things result in trauma and no trust."

## What makes it hard for people to experience good mental health and what can be done to improve this? This may include how people find, access and experience mental health treatment and support and how services link with each other.

"there is no-one who makes sure that people are ok, and accessing what they need. Services which improve quality of life and meaningfulness of life are incredibly underfunded. Daily living support is not available for people when they need it desperately. Crisis services are underfunded and staffing is often of very poor quality, ie they have a poor understanding of the basic humanity and dignity of clients."

## What are the drivers behind some communities in Victoria experiencing poorer mental health outcomes and what needs to be done to address this?

N/A

## What are the needs of family members and carers and what can be done better to support

**them?**

"To be well informed of family members diagnosis, treatment, interventions."

**What can be done to attract, retain and better support the mental health workforce, including peer support workers?**

Better working conditions and more pay.

**What are the opportunities in the Victorian community for people living with mental illness to improve their social and economic participation, and what needs to be done to realise these opportunities?**

Some organisations offer supported employment which is a wonderful initiative. Perhaps community groups to have a financial incentive for including people with mental health issues.

**Thinking about what Victorias mental health system should ideally look like, tell us what areas and reform ideas you would like the Royal Commission to prioritise for change?**

More funding for services who have a focus on quality of life and connection. Funding and training to improve the quality of the care provided.

**What can be done now to prepare for changes to Victorias mental health system and support improvements to last?**

N/A

**Is there anything else you would like to share with the Royal Commission?**

My brother once talked to me about a time he was in a psych ward and the staff gave access to a [REDACTED]. its horrifying that such things may well occur and worse that no-one would believe that woman if she were to seek justice. People are very vulnerable when their mental health is low and even more so when they are on medication. it is crucial that there are safeguards which are very strong. it would be wonderful if the system had as its foundation a strong sense of shared humanity / struggle and compassion.