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Locked Bag 10 Parkville VIC 3052 Australia

A program of NorthWestern Mental Health and Melbourne Health

*Opening minds to a brighter future*

Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System  
PO Box 12079  
A'Beckett Street  
VICTORIA 8006

Monday 24<sup>th</sup> June, 2019

Dear Commissioners,

We write to provide this formal submission towards the above Royal Commission on behalf of the Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) service at Orygen Youth Health. Orygen Youth Health is a state government funded program that provides tertiary mental health services to young people aged 15 – 25 years with complex mental health needs in the Northern and Western suburbs of Melbourne.

There is a 95% prevalence rate of mental health conditions in people with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorders, hence it is not surprising that a number of young people presenting to our service for mental health treatment also have a diagnosed or suspected ASD.

We would like to highlight the following issues in relation to this population for the commissioners to take into consideration.

- 1) **There is a significant lack of access to low cost diagnostic assessment options for Autism Spectrum Disorders for young people.** Young people and their families are left with the cost of privately funding diagnostic assessments, particularly in the context of NDIS access requirements in relation to confirming diagnosis. In our catchment area, this is a significant challenge due to the low socio-economic populations that we service.
- 2) **At present our mental health workforce is in general not adequately equipped with the skills to provide treatment to this population.** The assessment and treatment of mental health

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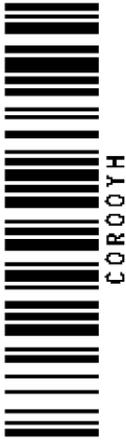
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difficulties where there is a comorbid ASD is a highly specialised area.. There is a significant shortage of funding within mental health services to provide the required training to enhance capacity in this area.

- 3) **Recovery from mental health difficulties in people who have a comorbid ASD generally takes longer than in those without ASDs.** At present there is a lack of specific funding to mental health services that takes into account the need for a longer episode of care.
- 4) **There is a lack of low cost support services for young people with mental health conditions and comorbid ASDs.** This is particularly an issue for those who will not be eligible for an NDIS plan or are awaiting funding. Overall, this leads to difficulties discharging this group of young people from mental health services.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback to the Royal Commission and taking the time to consider our input.

If you require any further information, do not hesitate to contact us on 9966 9100.

Kind Regards,

Johanna Rouse  
Autism Spectrum Disorders  
Coordinator  
Orygen Youth Health

Dr. Sandra Radovini  
Consultant Psychiatrist  
Autism Spectrum Disorders  
Orygen Youth Health

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