

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

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Name

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

"People need to understand that mental illness is a form of 'injury' or 'wound' that requires the treatment/response appropriate to that mental injury, as you would expect an appropriate treatment/response to any other form of injury. With the appropriate treatment/response that injury can be healed."

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?

"The conversation has begun and the understanding of mental illness is slowly unraveling. In order to further support people with mental illness, care and respect needs to be practiced with sincerity. To prevent mental illness, people need to be approached as people, not as inanimate objects. A culture of care, respect and tolerance of one another needs to be fostered. People need to come before profits. When policies/procedures/visions/values are established, they need to be followed. In order to support people to get early treatment and support, a number of things are required: belief in the person who expresses anxiety/distress about matters; open communication and co-operation towards realistic goals; sustained support after issues are identified and the strategies for remedy are applied. The steps in finding the correct support service need to be clearer and the information more widely available. The information needs to be unambiguous and cover the state/federal services available and which services need to be contacted for a given matter. Service providers also need to have this information at hand. For example, general practitioners, workplaces, unions, libraries, hospitals, schools/TAFE/universities, etc. "

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

N/A

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.

"Lack of information on where to find help. Not following policies/ procedures designed to prevent mental injury. Eg. a workplace may have anti-bullying policies in place, but they are ignored and this ignorant action is defended by management to protect the business or their own position. Lack of funds/ financial ability to access funds to pay for support/treatment/ legal advice. Lack of appropriate timeframes granted when a person with a mental injury applies for support. The injury can become exacerbated when the anxious/depressed person is expected to access the correct forms, fill them out, provide evidence, attending interviews and medical examinations, and respond in the short or barely flexible timeframes. In addition to this, a lack of resources (internet/finance), lack of experience in such circumstances, incorrect advice, or lack of knowledge

by service providers. "

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

"Lack of resources available to those who are denied access to services, eg legal advice, financial support because they fulfill the stringent requirement to receive them. Prevention is better than cure. Don't allow people to become mentally as well as financially destitute before they are offered relief. "

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

They need to be reassured that their family/ friend will not be denied access to support that they require.

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

"Follow through on policies/procedures already in place. That is, do not manipulate 'discretion' to obtain a pre-formed outcome. That includes providing a paper trail that insinuates all the correct procedures have been followed, when in fact, they have been orchestrated and the injured person is left to incur further injury. Appropriate timeframes and financial means need to be provided. Less paperwork. "

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?

An avenue for people to express that they have been injured. Accountability on those that were negligent in causing the injury.

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

"Investigation into the services that are already in place. That is, policies/ procedures that are not implemented when they ought to be, or manipulated. Eg, WorkSafe practice is to reject a mental injury claim from the beginning. This is a well known practice that occurs and does not help the injured person in any way. "

What can be done now to prepare for changes to Victoria's mental health system and support improvements to last?

Be sincere. Apply care and respect. Have realistic timeframes for answers. Closely examine the practices that are occurring in services already set up.

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

N/A