

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

## Organisation Name

N/A

## Name

Ms Fiona Kumar

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

"The community requires further health messages about the understanding of mental illnesses. There continues to be a misconception about mental illnesses being chronic and debilitating, which needs to be addressed. Using social media platforms, schools, universities can significantly improve health literacy and understanding about mental illness. "

### **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 response for people to receive mental health support is working well, primary care sector access should be improved. There is also a need for psychosocial programs to help individuals integrate into the community. "

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

"Training of health professionals in identifying risk behaviours is going well. Community supports are integral in addressing a significant health issue. Suicide prevention requires an individual to be well supported to see the positive in their life, without community programs that can assist with individuals being engaged in psychosocial programs you won't be able to achieve a decline in suicide rates. "

### **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.**

The changing societal expectations. Life pressure has been impacting individuals' mental health. There needs to be an emphasis on what supports are available for individuals to access when they have concerns about their mental health. People in the community are not aware of mental health services which are concerning as we the health care providers are self-stigmatising by not promoting our services.

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

"Increased stress, lack of community engagement, substance use, post-traumatic stress "

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

Better scaffolding of family/carer supports

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

"Promote the occupation, psychiatry is viewed as a non-stimulating environment by young graduate nurses as they are unable to see career advancement and have misperceptions about mental health settings. "

**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?**

"We have limited psychosocial programs, we need more community houses, drop-in centres, structured day programs for people who cannot access private psychiatry. "

**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?**

"Change needs to be workforce development, we have a significant shortage of trained mental health professionals. We should be attracting a new graduate workforce by promoting mental health nursing. The mental health nurse primary care initiative program needs to be reestablished to provide early assessment in the community. "

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

"Retain a workforce that is able to meet the demands, invest in building community programs that promote mental well being. Early assessment and primary care engagement should be reviewed to ensure that people who are vulnerable are receiving support earlier. "

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

N/A

I am writing to submit a formal submission to the Royal Commission Hearing about research findings. I have researched consumer and clinician perspectives into the use of Advance Statements for a PhD thesis. The conclusions of this research highlighted that there is a gap in clinician training when there is a change in practice or legislation. Clinicians in the study lacked knowledge about Advance Statements to promote this document to consumers, and this was also consistent with consumers about not having an adequate understanding of the purpose of Advance Statements. Patient rights was also a significant finding as consumers feel that there continue to be limited choices given to those who are experiencing a chronic mental health condition. The individual's preferences were stated to be important in care delivery and understanding to ensure that individuals can engage with the treatment provided to them. Access to accessing completed advances is a barrier due to system processes that do not allow a service-wide database that has completed Advance Statement. Promoting measures that enable a more significant say for consumers is a positive step however ensuring that there is a value attached is also important.