

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

SUB. 0002.0005.0060

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

I think a lot has been done over the last decade to improve the Victorian community's understanding of mental illness. What is currently more concerning is the division that exists between psychologists with their peak association body (APS) not advocating with Medicare for equity of number of sessions and continued access to all psychologists being able to continue in the service of those with severe and chronic mental health issues.

## **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?**

All categories of psychologists who work with people to prevent mental health illness are not given equity with the Medicare Initiative. Clinical psychologists (who receive a higher rebate for their clients) are not the only psychologists who work at the 'coal face' of mental health. This is confusing for clients and potential clients.

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

"I think there is much more that could be done to prevent suicide. If more funding was available from the government for psychologists who work in the field of suicide prevention to deliver free seminars for the public, either through schools or other organisations, then this could work to spread the issues involved to a wider audience at the ground level."

## **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.**

"I think that most GP's are sending their vulnerable clients along to psychologists. However, good mental health can be masked by people and can be lost in the system. A campaign that continues to heighten awareness of the issues and the places to find help could be carried out more regularly, not just a week here and there."

## **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?**

"This is a huge issue because, as we see in the media, many kind, attentive and loving parents still miss the warning signs in their child/adolescent offspring. The idea of Carers needs to be more widely seen as a huge and important role and I would like to see a special effort in researching and targeting these 'hidden' groups of people in finding all kinds of support that may not exist at

this time. I see psychologists as being in a good position to offer individual or group or community input into devising formats and services specifically targeting the group of close relatives and others who provide support to loved ones experiencing mental health problems."

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

"A thorough examination of the roles that each psychologist take in providing services to those with mental illness needs to occur. This, at a time when review of the mental health care medicare initiative is taking place. Some psychologists who have worked in this area for decades may lose the ability to service the group of severe mental illness if a step plan is brought in for psychologists as proposed by the Australian Psychological Society."

**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?**

N/A

**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?**

""As above""."

**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?**

N/A