

Dinka Jakovic - Story for the Royal Commission

I am the [REDACTED] and carer of my now deceased [REDACTED]. He suffered from drug addiction and when he attended his GP, confidentiality prevented us from knowing about his devastating drug use.

I want to emphasise that politicians need to walk in the shoes of patients and carers before they can make decisions about Victoria's mental health system.

Suggestions for improvement of the mental health system

My experiences as a carer have led me to the following suggestions for the RC:

- It should be recognised that a mental health crisis does not necessarily occur between the hours of 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday;
- Carers and family members of a patient receiving mental health care should be given free parking. It is taken for granted that carers have the financial means to pay. This should not be an impediment to them visiting their loved one;
- Patients with a mental illness should be given a designated place to smoke. This can reduce stress and tension between family members, patients and the treating team;
- For many people with a mental illness, a pet plays a vital role in their life. They or their carers cannot always be expected to pay the veterinary bills which can be quite significant;
- Nurses aides have been very compassionate and more should be retained;
- After discharge, there should be adequate follow-up. One phone call is not enough. It should also be understood that patients due to their mental illness are not capable to always attend appointments or be on time.
- There should be more bulk billing psychiatrists. Paying their fees puts a huge financial strain on families especially when there is no income because of their caring responsibilities;
- Support should still be provided to people with a mental illness that are not part of the NDIS. This will be the majority of people that have a mental illness;
- There is still a huge stigma around mental health, which needs to be addressed if people with mental illness are going to be accepted or recover;
- Medical organisations need to have an outreach service for carers and patients because if you do not have a connection with NDIS, the patient has nowhere to go;
- Nothing is black and white and people should be taken on face value;
- Patients in the hospitals are often over medicated and this needs to be addressed;
- There should be 24 hr clinics and pharmacies for medication and emergency treatment;
- All medical staff need mental health training. Police also need training in Mental Health. It should be a basic subject in schools also so that we all learn to be able to help. There is a need to be aware of high anxiety and there should be advocates that can pacify patients and situations. PEOPLE NEED TO USE THE RIGHT TONE;
- The financial cost to carers is huge and the carer and the patient would benefit from financial assistance;

- Mental health services especially the public hospitals need to employ the right people (those with empathy and understanding of the difficulties carers and mental health patients face) from the receptionist to the top medical staff. Listen to the elders who can teach them so much about caring for people with respect and kindness;
- The community needs to be educated about mental health and tolerance;
- Patients need supports with them in hospital and in all rehabilitation areas where anxiety is heightened and patients become childlike and vulnerable. They need instruction and supervision with medication and the carers needs to be aware of this;
- People with a mental illness are patients, not clients or consumers; and
- Understand and accommodate for the fact that not everyone is computer literate.
- Society, government and the law need to address struggles men face in daily life. Roles have changed enormously. The austerity facing men today has been greatly overseen.
- I needs to be acknowledged that mental illness does not only affect the carer but the whole family unity.
- Medical practitioners have become so insular that they no longer have any empathy. People have become just numbers.