

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

SUB: 0002.0025.0002

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

My submission is about helping adults who are not mentally able to adequately acknowledge or deal with their own illness. They may not fully understand that they are ill or know what to do yet refuse help from others.

## **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 person in my example had experienced a few symptoms of unwellness earlier in life and had accessed a psychiatrist and medication through family support. This was when the person was under 18.

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

"When a mentally unwell person is an adult and will not properly engage help there is nothing family, friends nor any one else can do. The person I'm writing about is a family member who ended up losing his job, losing his friends, running out of money and sleeping in his car with police moving him on. He rejected all family and friends. He had begun to harass another ex-friend online. He refused all contact. He became impossible to find unless police noticed a person asleep in a car or in an unregistered vehicle. Nothing could be done by his family to help him because he was considered by the police and CAT teams to be not at risk of harming himself or others.' This person's life's was destroyed by mental issues but no one could intervene unless he hurt others or himself. What happens to a person in this situation? This is a huge hole in our care of others."

## **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.**

See above. If a person is running away from everyone and is not a child then no one can help unless the situation is one where the person is considered violent or suicidal. How can we help such a person avoid reaching such a crisis point?

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

"I am no expert but if we are talking on a community level, employment or other programs that help isolated people to connect with others is crucial."

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

Family members and carers can do nothing if the ill person is an adult who refuses help (Cat

teams require consent of the individual) and becomes uncontactable. A solution needs to be found for this situation which is futile for the ill person and heart breaking for those who love that person.

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

This is not my focus in writing this submission but more money for facilities and training. People are waiting too long to get assistance.

**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 adult person cannot be helped to be economically or socially active when they don't understand or cannot act upon their illness, when they refuse intervention. If family and friends are rejected and the person avoids intervention by a CAT team or is not considered at risk for self harm or harm to others then they remain isolated and get worse. Who can pick up these people? Who can help them?"

**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?**

"An adult person cannot be helped when they don't understand or cannot act upon their illness, when they refuse intervention. If family and friends are rejected and the person avoids intervention by a CAT team or is not considered at risk for self harm or harm to others then they remain isolated and get worse. Who can pick up these people? Who can help them? They struggle on alone becoming poor and homeless. "

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

"Privacy and personal freedom are crucial but when an adult person is sleeping in an unregistered and uninsured car, has lost work and all friends and refuses family help, does that person really have to reach the point of self harm or suicide before receiving help? "

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

"People dealing with loved ones with mental illness are having an incredibly sad and stressful time that affects their own mental health , but for a family member to know that a beloved person is self destructing and cannot be contacted or helped by anyone unless they are self harming or suicidal is arguably much worse. Wanting to help but not being able to because that person is over 18 is heartbreaking. It is like that person has become a Missing Person. It is as if that person has died but there is no closure. Only helpless worry."