

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

SUB: 0002.0025.0093

## Name

Anonymous

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

"Have people with mental health issues portrayed on mainstream television like soap operas. This educates and celebrates diversity to the public. Limit the portrayal of alcohol and drugs on television especially when children are watching. Bring back community announcements on AOD and other mental health issues. Please provide more documentaries on issues of mental health and lived experiences to challenge the myths such as all people with mental health issues are violent. People need to receive the correct information -tv programs provide contact numbers when a sensitive issue is addressed - please give the most appropriate helpline for the issue that has been addressed. Life line is used all the time. If the issue on the Tv is about trauma the [REDACTED] and 1800 respect organisations are definitely more appropriate and should be listed before lifeline. Explore the issue of suicide and explore the community attitudes on the subject. My experiences therapists, nurses and psychiatrists did not take me seriously when I voiced out loud that I was suicidal. nothing was done. Apparently the time people suicide is when they are getting well when they have more energy to do so. "

### **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?**

"Challenge stigma -Provide more professional development and education programs on mental health in kindergartens, schools and work places. Focus on good health and wellbeing including the connection to the mind and the body. promoting a healthy lifestyle, to be a healthy person is working at preventing mental health issues. If the stigma of mental health is addressed we would have more people seeking help earlier or working at preventing poor mental health. We need to change community attitudes and opinions around mental illness and suicide. We need to have more access to mental health professionals definitely making them more affordable and more available. psychologist need to have more financial support so they don't need to take on so many clients to stay afloat and this would free up their time to give their clients out of hours support if needed. Many psychologists experience burnout, compromising their health and they have to leave their vulnerable clients in the lurch. Clients left with no psychologist, choosing to then stop therapy or try and find another appropriate psychologist. From experience not an easy task to find a psychologist that your needs can be addressed. Some have waiting lists, some are too expensive, some don't work with the NDIS and some are not experienced to work with complex trauma. Clients need more out of session and hours support, preferably their own. psychologists. Otherwise helplines need to be available for those experiencing a variety of mental illnesses and people who are reaching out for help. I am a trauma survivor and I access 1800 respect a very supportive 24 hour counselling service that is thankfully funded by the government. In comparison, The [REDACTED] is an expert service in Trauma they are only available 9-5 they need to be more accessible (at the moment you have to wait for a counsellor to call you back this is inconvenient and limits the opportunity to receive specialised help. This integral service needs

government funding now!! "

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

"Many issues of suicide need to be addressed. People need to be educated on the difference of self harm and suicide. There is a focus on young men when it comes to suicide. We need to focus on all suicides and attempted suicides and look at the recent research. Educate the community on the risk factors and the signs of declining mental health in a person. Again documentaries on preventative ways to address suicide, promote connection and community, find ways to decrease isolation, promote positive life style (including physical exercise) get the media to promote more positive stories that celebrate life instead of crime, sensationalism and loss. Address social issues that contributing to the suicide issue, social media, daily life pressures, unemployment, family violence etc. our society needs to celebrate, life and diversity. (The transgendered community and issues of suicide needs to be addressed)"

**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 pressures daily life and raising a family and trying to make ends meet. Longer working hours and bigger mortgages. The government can play a role in providing policy to ease the pressure on all people, the government to assess and revamp the mental health plan. Change attitudes to accessing this plan, apparently you can't get life insurance if you have had a mental health plan. I have already addressed some of these issues in the previous question. Change the attitude to getting help, receiving counselling and hospital admissions. Allow psychologists to visit their clients in hospital. Provide patients, psychologists and counsellors in hospital. Allow the patient's psychiatrist to correspond with the hospital psychiatrist for consistency of care. I experienced mental health treatment that was detrimental to my overall health and recovery A lack of knowledge and support for me, a complex trauma survivor caused me to be extremely retraumatised and in turn hospitalised. Please Legislate that psychologists are trauma informed and use trauma informed practice-so they do no harm. I was not safe and was significantly harmed in therapy! A lot of services do not link with each other, my psychiatrist doesn't communicate with my psychologist. We need a team approach in mental healthcare that shares resources. "

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

I don't live in regional Australia or belong to a underprivileged or marginalised community. So I can't comment except to acknowledge the First Nation communities have many social issues that would be impacting on their mental health.

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

"Provide more affordable and accessible counselling from mental health professionals so family members and carers can get appropriate and relevant support. People who care about their love ones need to be able to talk about the issues that are currently affecting them such that, their daughter is experiencing symptoms of complex trauma and she is in hospital again. "

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

### **including peer support workers?**

"Value the mental health professionals and give them more wages and funding to do their jobs. Community and welfare sector needs an injection funds. Two of my support workers left their job because a fear of a lack of job security due to the NDIS. Apparently the NDIS originally was not designed for Mental Health. I suggest that the NDIS is assessed and evaluated to ensure that it effectively addresses the issues that mental health consumers (a terrible word) experience on a day to day basis including, daily functioning, symptoms, hospitalisation etc. I receive the NDIS and I was told that I could not be funded for weekly Psychologist appointments only fortnightly. My weekly psychologist sessions are crucial to my trauma recovery. "

### **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?**

"I am aware of a few cafes mainly in neighbourhood houses that train people with mental health and other disabilities. This is a great initiative and social enterprise that needs to be realised, replicated and generously funded. Neighbourhood houses do so much for mental health, providing a safe community that connects a diversity of people. "

### **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?**

"Improve public hospitals, make nurses more accessible to patients. Improve the physical appearance of the interior of the hospital. Get artists to paint positive images on the wall. We all know how our environment affects our mood and mental health. Encourage more access to nature, including animals. Maybe a small bush walk or animals could visit the hospital. People with mental health issues desperately need a positive environment to heal and enjoy life. An overhaul of psychologists making them more affordable and accessible and knowledgeable on trauma informed practice. The [REDACTED] has been integral to my recovery and knowledge of trauma. I now can rarely access this important organisation as their lack of funds effects their service delivery. The television and film industry need to address how mental illness and mental health issues are portrayed and managed in the media. "

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

"Start listening to those who are effected by mental illness and mental health issues. Reduce the effects of stigma by educating the wider community by training, community announcements, mainstream Tv and film documentary. music and song writing could in on the radio. We need to Address issues of social media and how it can be used to show mental health in a better light. Most importantly we need the funds to change Victoria's mental health system for the better. "

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

People who experience mental illness and issues deserve MORE not less. At the moment there are people reaching out for help and are falling through the cracks in our mental health system in Victoria. In some cases people who are trying to navigate the system are becoming more unwell and carers are at their wits end. Question what is the relationship between suicide and trying to access our current mental health system in Victoria? We need to do research on how the medications that psychiatrists and doctors prescribe effects those who take them. It's 2019 we

need to fund critical research on how the brain works!!!