

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

## Organisation Name

N/A

## Name

Ms Andrea Purcell

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

Local support agencies which include staff/volunteers who are living with a 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?

Quicker access to support as it can be life threatening.

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

"Support groups, better access "

## 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.

"Govt depts need to have more appropriately trained staff to recognise and handle individuals better, e.g.. Centrelink, Tax Office, Work cover. So many sufferers who are involved with these various departments are treated like their condition is non-existent. I have experienced personally, treatment with the WorkCover system where I suffered a stress injury causing PTSD, chronic depression, and anxiety. The WorkCover system itself, exacerbates problems for people suffering with these conditions rather than supporting and encouraging further treatment to get people back on their feet. I know that the WorkCover system has caused multiple suicide with victims. I myself, contemplated suicide because of the treatment I was receiving and had to basically give up my entitlements because of the system as I could no longer continue with how I was being treated. I know I'm not alone, and it's not just WorkCover, Centrelink tax office etc that need to have people that recognise that people do have mental conditions and need to be treated accordingly. If governments are sincere about improving our mental health system it has to be a 100% across the board. "

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

"Obviously lower socioeconomic areas, will find it very difficult to have access to support. It is also difficult for people suffering with these conditions, to come out and seek support. A lot of people suffering with these conditions find it difficult to actually speak about this or come out and say that they actually have a problem."

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

"Again various departments within the government have access to records of people who are suffering with mental conditions. Perhaps then they could contact families to offer support. I

myself, again, under the WorkCover system, was offered no support or advice for my family members. I think this would have been extremely beneficial and perhaps would have given me some more support as well."

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

"Like any workplace, staff me to be proficiently trained in the various areas of expertise. There are so many different areas of mental health, that you need to have people with expert training in these various areas. Again, I would highly recommend, that support groups include people that have suffered with various conditions and can relate to individuals that are coming in for support. I know myself, I have a much better understanding for people suffering with various mental illness such as those I have suffered with and living with now."

**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 personally don't know of any. So I believe I wouldn't be alone full stop so people suffering with these conditions, at this point, know very little of areas where they can go and get support."

**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?**

"Without reiterating everything I've said beforehand, I highly recommend that all departments are correctly trained and recognise the problems of people suffering with mental illness and rather than exacerbate problems, know that they can refer these people for further help and support."

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

"This is a huge area that needs a massive overhaul and will not happen over night. I think that if everyone is uniform as I've said before, we have a much higher chance of creating and enhancing our mental health system with professionally trained people and support groups available."

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

"I have been suffering with this for more than 10 years and have taken this to a number of politicians over the years, complaining about the disgusting treatment of WorkCover victims with mine being a mental health condition. I have taken this opportunity to voice my concerns again and I truly hope that something can actually be done this time. If the government is true to wanting to improve the mental health system, then they need to do a massive overhaul of the WorkCover system particularly for people in that system with mental health problems."