

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

Organisation Name

N/A

Name

Mrs Melissa Edwards

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

Education at all ages and levels. Mental health and self care should be considered as important parts of curriculum from early primary throughout.

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?

N/A

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

N/A

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.

"Poor and limited options for housing. Housing options like Supported Residential Services (SRS) are often inappropriate for clients who are vulnerable. Many SRS's are known to have violence and drug issues with limited staff support for the complex social and mental health issues that people in these services face. There are limited other options for support, meaning that acute services are clogged up with people with no housing options or options that are un-supportive and detrimental to a person's mental health. To improve this, long term housing options need to be established with appropriately trained staff that meet the individual needs of people with mental health issues. Ideally, there would be options for people to live on their own, or with a small number of other people. Limited opportunity for engagement in meaningful activities. To experience good mental health, people need to be given opportunities to recover and reclaim their life. This means real opportunities to gain employment, opportunities for engagement in social groups and skills based activities. These opportunities are currently difficult to find, or lacking completely. There appears to be little structure or funding for these activities and rely on the good hearts of volunteers. Flexibility in engagement in employment, social and skills based activities are crucial to be able to meet the needs of people with mental illness. For example, drop in groups where all people are welcome at any time to seek support in a non-judgmental way and engage in meaningful activities should be funded treated as a crucial part of mental health service delivery. "

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?

Family members and carers need to be heard. They are often the people that know and understand best what the person with mental health issues are going through. Support with education and clear referral pathways is essential. Support and funding for social workers who can provide family counselling needs to be readily available.

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

"The skills that the mental health workforce bring need to be completely reconsidered. Allied health such as occupational therapists, psychologists and social workers need to be valued at all stages of mental health care. Currently, in many places the involvement of allied health staff is tokenistic. The mental health workforce is dominated by nurses, many of whom do not have the necessary skills to apply recovery principles and support mental health care. As an allied health professional, it saddens me to see all the work that could be done with allied health intervention that is just not able to be done due to limited funding and recognition in the workplace. To increase the allied health presence in facilities and community teams would help with both team morale and would offer skills integral to the recover of mental health consumers. Reviewing clients goals and health plans would likely indicate the need and desire of mental health consumers to have diverse therapy and input from those who can support their recovery. Peer support workers need to be properly supported with appropriate opportunities to develop their skills and understanding of the role. This is currently lacking, leading in some cases to a high turnover of peer support workers, indicating environments that are not supportive of this emerging workforce."

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?

N/A

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