

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

SUB: 0002.0006.0099

## Name

Anonymous

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

I am completing this survey to provide feedback on my experiences with mental health issues as a young child. At 11 years of age my son has experienced depression and suicidal thoughts. As a young person in primary school I am unable to get access to mental health services due to his age. I have been informed that services are only provided to secondary schools. Last Christmas a girl in his class (grade 5) stepped in front of a train and committed suicide. Headspace came to the school to talk to children - twice. For two 1 hour sessions. I contacted them about counselling for my son - he is too young. We need to start looking at identifying and treating mental health earlier! Education and support services need to be lifelong. From mothers with babies having health nurses that are trained to help mental health issues in post partum mothers up through kinder and primary education. Its not some condition that hits teenagers at 13.

### **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?**

What is working well - there are services. Lets not limit these too specific years - age groups or 'at risk' groups. Its such a broad spectrum! I barely know an adult that isn't or hasn't been on anti-depressants. We need to start looking at identifying and treating mental health earlier! Education and support services need to be lifelong. From mothers with babies having health nurses that are trained to help mental health issues in post partum mothers up through kinder and primary education. Its not some condition that hits teenagers at 13. We need to look at medication for young people - sometimes counselling is insufficient. STOP making people pay HUGE doctors fees to get a mental health plan. SURELY Mental Health plan. JUST cover 10 visits or whatever per year for every person to see a mental health professional!!!

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

"Lets talk about it ALOT more. Childrens and Teens need to know its forever. You know what is really great. An episode about suicide on SBS that discussed with a group of people that had attempted suicide and failed - why they did it, how they feel about it now. I am not sure if it was an ABC you can't ask that - but it was similar. That should be shown in schools. It shows that some people have a terrible time - they don't want to live anymore - and then things change - and they get help and they feel differently. The darkness of depression means some people cannot see the light .. but that doesn't mean they wont see the light soon. AS ABOVE THE FIRST THING YOU NEED TO STOP IS THE DR REFERRAL SYSTEM FOR A MENTAL HEALTH PLAN. Increase the no of mental health visits all Australians can claim under medicare."

**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.**

"Having to go to a doctor for a MENTAL HEALTH PLAN is not working well. I have attended doctors and paid a fortune to get a plan for myself and a child and it is 1) EXPENSIVE 2) POINTLESS The doctor asked no questions - a survey that said from 1-10 how down do you feel, repeated questions And then a limited referral. I have doctors say - have 4 visits then come back and get ANOTHER Plan. I explained why I needed the visits and the dr said ""I don't want to know why.."" SO WHY THE limit on the visits!!! So they can charge you to get ANOTHER mental health plan "

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

I think its everywhere and we are actually just getting better at discussing it. I think a sense of community and purpose helps people to overcome it. Perhaps signing people up to volunteer and community programs would help.

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

Stop making us pay to get costly referrals. Give us more back on visits to psychologists etc via medicare Online support groups for carers to discuss what works.. No one has time to go to a one on one support group anymore. Have community events like - mental Health groups riding day or beach rubbish collection day.

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

"This is definitely an issue. Pay better - better hours. Make roles more flexible, more prestigious. Make the careers into these roles easier for people to learn about. Many years ago we needed more female IT staff. The CIO did one thing - he offered a flexible option for female staff with IT skills and he advertised it in the Melbourne Child - free parental mag. That's it - that simple. Imagine if you had a short course - retrain and become a support worker, working flexible part time hours around young children through their local councils. AND advertise it on parenting websites."

**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 not sure that social participation is the focus. I think it should be more of a focus. But also so should exercise and community involvement. Some people - not all need to be given an action plan for mental health that include all of these things - and support services. I do not think there is anyone that provides all this guidance especially NOT doctors. Doctors are too busy treating physical - they ARE NOT MENTAL HEALTH Professionals.

**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?**

'- More trained staff available - Available in Primary and Secondary Schools - No more Doctor mental health plans Start with those

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

' - as above

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

n/a