

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

Organisation Name

N/A

Name

Mrs Stefanie Brophy

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

"Continue to support the promotion of mental health. Use the following strategies: -Compare it to physical health. Explore how mental health influences physical health and vice versa; -Illustrate how we access treatment for physical health concerns and the need to do the same for mental health concerns, (we would see a doctor for a virus to ensure we access the right treatment for our symptoms to improve. We need to do the same with anxiety/depression without hesitation), (we take vitamin supplements to maintain our physical health. We need to check in often with family and friends, our GP or counselor to maintain our mental health). -Utilise individuals, organisations and businesses that are influential in the community; celebrities, sportsmen and women, the AFL, the NRL, retail stores (Kmart, Myer, David Jones, Target, Total Tools, Bunnings); -Build a strong presence online and through social media. -Support beyondblue, PANDA and other organisations with more funding. -Target the disengaged community. Often mental health promotion occurs where the participants are possibly already engaged. Promoting mental health through mainstream avenues where the focus is not necessarily on health and well being, may reach people who would really benefit. The role of GPs: Make it a key component of every GP consult to ask about patient's mental health. Patients will then begin to understand and accept the important role of GPs and mental health. For some people, we know mental illness can manifest with physical health complaints. We also understand the impact chronic disease has on a person's mental health. Therefore, physical health cannot be managed without the management of mental health. The role of the media: Implement strict laws on how the media report on mental health and illness. Often the media associate crime and poverty with mental illness. Of course there is a relationship, however it is exaggerated and is detrimental to reducing the stigma and discrimination of 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?

"What is working well: There are many services available. There are lots of resources available such as fact sheets and self-help resources. Head to Health and Health Direct are great resources. GPs are becoming more aware of their vital role in promoting, preventing and treating mental health and illness. The Mental Health Care Plans, Medicare Better Access, and the mental health services available through the Primary Health Networks have given people the opportunity to access services they may have not been able to previously. Services are available through community health centers and are targeted to the needs of the local community. School support staff such as nurses, youth workers, and psychologists and social workers employed by the Education Department, do a great job running well-being programs and identifying students in need, despite their big work loads and lack of resources. Headspace centers have given young people the opportunity to access support that is specific to their needs. How to better prevent mental illness and support access to earlier treatment: -Reduce stigma and discrimination.

Particularly for males and including people using alcohol and other drugs. -Support parents. Being a new first-time mum, the lack of support available has really astonished me. I don't have a 'village', however as I work in the health profession, I have the skills and can afford to seek help. It's upsetting to think about parents who don't have the ability to seek help and are suffering in isolation and the impact this has on their child. It can be very difficult for parents to reach out for help, and I believe many parents want the help but need others to assist them with accessing support. More frequent appointments with the Maternal and Child Health Nurse is needed. Appointments need to occur in the home, particularly in the first 6 weeks of a child's birth. The focus of these appointments is primarily on the child; more consideration of the parents needs is essential. The parent groups are not helpful as they are run by staff who lack the necessary knowledge and skills required to provide adequate support. In some cases, they are more harmful and cause parents to feel more isolated. -Continue to educate GPs about mental health and illness so they have the knowledge and skills to better identify mental health concerns, treat and refer onto other services. -People are unaware that they can turn to their GP for mental health concerns. People don't know that they can access counselors through the Mental Health Care Plan and that free counselling is available through community health centers and the Primary Health Networks. There is a belief among the community that a person must be severely unwell to access services. We need to shift this thinking and focus on early intervention and normalize access to mental health services, particularly the low intensity services. -Encourage people to have a regular GP/Clinic in order for a therapeutic relationship to occur. This will result in the GP/Clinic knowing their patients well and is able to properly assess their needs. Often GP consults are very short and it is difficult for the GP to build a therapeutic relationship with their patients and truly identify the needs. The individual will build a rapport with the GP/Clinic over time and feel comfortable sharing their concerns, such as mental health concerns. -Include mental health and well being into the school curriculum. -Continue to educate child care, kinder, primary and secondary school staff about mental health and illness so they have the knowledge and skills to support their students and refer onto services. -Wait lists are a major problem. There are so many services available, however the wait lists are turning people away. Demand is greater than what services can manage. It can be very difficult for people to reach out for help. Often when they finally build the courage to do so, they are informed of the lengthy wait. This can be very disheartening and prevent people from trying to access services again. Waiting for long periods of time can cause the person to feel forgotten, not important and increase their level of psychological distress resulting in the need to access crisis services, which could have been prevented. It would be great if people were followed up with telephone calls while they are on wait lists. The phone calls would come from someone within the service that they are on the wait list for. This would keep the person engaged and connected so they remain motivated to seek help and they don't fall through the gaps. "

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.

"We live in a wonderful country with many opportunities, however we as a society experience poor mental health despite our fortunes. Lack of resilience and the necessary skills to cope with stressful situations makes it hard for people to experience good mental health. Some people don't

have emotional intelligence, they have not been taught throughout their childhood and adolescent years about managing feelings and emotions and coping mechanisms, therefore when they become adults and have responsibilities and face difficult circumstances, they don't have the skills required to maintain their mental health. Emotional intelligence needs to be taught at school. Access to alcohol. The promotion of alcohol is excessive and the number of bottle shops in close proximity of each other is detrimental. There needs to be strict laws on advertising, such as reducing the number of ads on TV (particularly during sport coverage); the labels on alcohol need to follow a similar path to cigarettes; and there needs to be a reduction in the number of bottle shops by enforcing strict laws around how many stores that sell alcohol are within a certain proximity. Difficulty navigating mental health services by individuals and by services. There are lots of services available, however it is unclear on eligibility criteria and what the right services are for an individual at a certain point in time. Services are not aware of what other services are available and when they decline someone from accessing their service, no follow up is provided to see if that person has been able to access services elsewhere. Individuals don't understand what services they are referred to and what support is offered to them. "

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?

N/A

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

N/A

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 Victoria's 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 Victoria's 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