

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

SUB. 0002.0016.0014

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

"More campaigns on TV and social media using high profile celebrities such as sports people to target males who are non help seeking and to reduce stigma. More compulsory education in primary and high school including provision of education to school teachers to inform students about mental illness and seeking help. Provision of more supports for families feeling the effects of mental illness eg. support for carers, parents of children with mental illness, children of parents with mental illness, siblings of siblings with 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?**

"I think what is currently working well is the support provided in more residential/long term based mental health services such as CCUs, youth resi rehabs etc. I think there is a lot of accessible resources available online that can be helpful such as the headspace website for young people. I think phone help lines can also be particularly helpful in times of crisis. However I think what needs to be done better to prevent mental illness is to target stigma, increase education and awareness to get people talking about mental illness and to seek help if they need it - I think a lot of the time consumers or their families don't seek help until they are in a crisis situation. I think there also needs to be more phone help lines readily available for people to access when in crisis as these help lines currently have difficulty meeting the demand of need when people do do the right thing and seek help - we need more funding for these services and more mental health services in general! "

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

"Asist training is a great training available for workers in the mental health system and the wider community to access to prevent suicide, I have found this particularly beneficial for my practice. There is a lot of online resources and professional development opportunities available to mental health workers to further develop their understanding of suicide and how to prevent it. We need more talk about mental illness and suicide to reduce stigma so people seek help. We also need to educate people that suicide is not a dirty word and is not an act of selfishness. We need more education around mental illness so consumers and their families know how to seek help and access services. We need more specific education around help seeking and if someone actually says they aren't doing ok - the person providing the help needs to know what to do in this situation beyond just checking in. We need to improve inpatient units/psych wards that admit people in times of crisis - there is not enough of these units/wards and the ones that do exist are not meeting the demand for service (there is never enough beds to accommodate need and people are getting rushed out the door before they can get the help they need so then often get discharged from these facilities still at high risk which can result in suicide). We need more phone help lines and services that attend to crisis situations such as psych triage/CAT to better accommodate the

demand for service - there is currently a lot of pressure on these types of services and there is not enough of them We need police who often attend to crisis situations to be better equipped and educated to deal with mental illness and suicidality, particularly if there is AOD involved - they need mandatory training - this could be a game changer to preventing more suicides "

**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.**

"Stigma around mental illness Lack of understanding of how to seek help Not enough services, lack of access to services of service availability particularly in rural regions Not enough funding for services = limited resources and poorer outcomes We need more funding for mental health and more services Aus wide We need more education to reduce stigma and increase understanding of help seeking We need more auditing of mental health workers to ensure they are doing there jobs properly We need more support for mental health workers to prevent burn out (funding and more services will improve this as it will decrease pressure/demand on service) "

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

"Lack of education Lack of cultural competency Lower ses - lack of employment/education opportunities, more access to AOD, more domestic violence/crime Where the community is situated eg. rural location and a lack of services in these areas/accessibility to services in other areas We need more education re: mental illness and access to basic education for poorer populations to increase opportunities for further education/employment We need more cost effective health services We need more health services in rural communities We need more funding and mental health services Aus wide We need to target drug trafficking and how easily accessible drugs are to the community rather than the drug users We need more culturally competent mental health workers to work with Aboriginal and Torres Straight islander communities "

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

"Needs of family members and carers include respite, more education, financial support, individual mental health support, linkage with support services that can help with at home care including cleaning/cooking to reduce burden on them etc Carers allowance through Centrelink needs to be more! Better education is required Access to respite services needs to be increased Mental health services need to work better with families to include them in the recovery process "

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

"More funding, more resources, more services to meet Demand, more peer support workers, better debriefing/reflective practices for mental health workers, more services that can be accessed to provide support to mental health workers, create more supportive mental health workplaces "

**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?**

ndis is helpful however needs improvement for people with mental illness to access it - mental illness often doesn't meet the criteria of disability there needs to be more disability employment services such as echo to cater to the needs of individuals with mental health to help these people find jobs and access the community

**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?**

"-reduce stigma and increase awareness -improve education for consumers, families and all education facilities across Vic to target, address and prevent mental illness -increase funding for mental health education, resources and services -increase availability and accessibility of services particularly in rural areas -target help seeking behaviours to reduce incidence of crisis and prevent suicide, focus on early intervention "

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

Notify consumers and mental health workers of what is happening and the changes that are occurring Audit/mandate all mental health workplaces and workers more regularly Get governments on board to fund and support mental health service into the future

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

"I am passionate about helping and working with individuals who suffer with mental health issues. I am currently working as a youth support worker for a youth residential rehabilitation service and am amazed everyday by the lack of resources and funds that are available to us. We want to do our jobs well to help some of the most vulnerable people but can only do so much with the little funding and resources we have to work with. The lack of mental health services, as well as housing services available to young people and the wider community is also dismal. We have often had to discharge our youth to homelessness as there has been nowhere for them to go - particular if refuge services or homelessness services are full/not safe or other mental health facilities have monthly long waiting lists. Improvement across the board for mental health services is desperately needed!!!!"