

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

SUB: 0002.0020.0001

## Name

Anonymous

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

To cease and desist the 2 tiered system that has been implemented for psychologists. Clinical are not better or more educated or superior in any way to other streams of psychologists. This 2 tiered system is causing undue stress on patients mental health and continuity of care.

### **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?**

"As above. Remove that only clinical psychologists can assess and diagnose a person's mental health for Centrelink, Hospitals etc. This has caused me great anguish and stress and is a factor in me not getting my DSP as I was forced to see and pay a clinical psychologist who had I feel had an issue with me personally, was negative in their treatment and correspondence, caused me greater stress and refused to provide Centrelink with information unless I paid \$500 to GST"

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

Stop forcing people from seeing their current psychologist whom they have a great rapport with and force them to see a clinical psychologist in order to access other services

### **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.**

"My story: I applied for DSP due to medical issues and feeling depressed. I was forced to stop my counselling as they were not recognised by Centrelink and see a Clinical Psychologist. I found her to be rude and abrupt. I felt then and now that she had an issue with me personally. I would describe her as clinically cold. I saw her for 7 sessions paying a gap of \$45 each visit and on newstart that is a lot of money. I gave her permission to speak to Centrelink. They called her twice and wrote to her. She did not respond. My DSP application was denied. I wrote to her asking for a letter for my appeal. No response. I wrote again and then called the practice manager at the clinic she operated out of. Was told that it would cost me \$500 plus GST for a report. I did not ask for a report just a letter. I went to my GP and asked for a copy of the 6 session letter. They did not have one. My GP put in a request for my records from the Psychologist. No response. Request sent again. No response. called clinic and said I was reporting to APRAH. Got the 6 session letter. Not a nice letter, very negative and written after 7 sessions after I had stopped seeing her. Stated I was fine no depression. Yet during the treatment she spoke to my GP and I was put on anti-depressants. Which were later increased at her recommendation. The letter also contains information I wrote in my original letter asking for a letter for Centrelink. Information I gave her after I had stopped seeing her. I have since reported her to APRAH and started the process of reporting her to the Health Commission. I am now under care in mind and seeing a mental health nurse who is assisting greatly but under the current system my prior psychologist and my current

counsellor are seen as being worthless. Yet they have done more for my mental health than the Clinical. And I blame the Govt policies of a two tiered system as detrimental to my Mental and physical health and for me not getting my DSP."

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

Change the 2 tiered system so that all people have access to all services and have continuity of care

**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?**

"Stop the 2 tiered system. Equal pay for equal job. Clinical is no different than a psychologist who has a generalist , health, child psychologist. Keep mental health workers by paying them well and providing workplace assistance"

**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?**

Remove the hurdle of requiring a clinical psychologist to access DSP. When my future is secure then i can better focus on my health. Worrying about my bills and access to services is detrimental as is being forced to change psychologists.

**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?**

Equal pay for all psychologists under Medicare

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

Equal pay for all psychologists and ability tp diagnose and assess their own patients

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

"I have proof in writing of from Centrelink, My doctor and the clinical psychologists letter proving what I have said. I can supply this if necessary. The current system of forcing me to go to a clinical psychologist has meant I am now worse off mentally than before i went. On top of that this system has resulted in me experience greater life stressors which have further deteriorated my mental health"