

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

Organisation Name

N/A

Name

Mr Andrew Dickinson

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

"Note : My submission mainly concerns my current and disastrously bad experience of workplace bullying in a govt agency. The It's Never Okay TV ads are great. The message needs to be applied to other affected professions e.g. all workers in the public service, and to include workplace bullying."

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?

The It's Never Okay TV ads are great.

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.

"Require all govt agencies to adopt Zero Tolerance of workplace bullying, then have them regularly audited to ensure that it is not simply a policy announcement. Briefly, I was compelled to call out ██████████ as a bully in December. The bullying since escalated, including suspending me with pay in February. I am currently fighting a code of conduct enquiry, which the bully used as an excuse for the suspension, and was direct retaliation for continuing to stand up to his bullying. The initial episode triggered me into a 3-day panic attack including suicidal ideation, which is consistent with my mental illness (Bipolar Type II). I have disclosed, and the employer knows, but is pointedly ignoring their clear duty to understand and support, choosing instead to yell and scream, savage and belittle me. My employer, ██████████, has lived experience as the #1 selection criterion, so there are many staff with mental illness and disabilities. Of course the agency has an anti-bullying policy, but the agency pointedly ignores it, going as far as backing exec bullies against their victims, as is proven (many times over, in writing) in my case. This makes ██████████ a bully's paradise. My tormentor has no insight, no empathy, no sense of humour, and continues to express no remorse. Upper mgt is fully supporting him in escalating the persecution campaign against me, to the extent of appointing lawyers for him (and his exec accomplices), but not for me ! This is for my complaint to FWC. Despite everything being stacked against me, and my job clearly being in jeopardy, I continue to stand up to this insensitive oaf. The main reason is the bystander syndrome. I am confident, eloquent and unmovably principled. Many of my colleagues are more vulnerable. My tormentor is pushy and aggressive with all staff, and is at least grooming new victims as we speak, and on balance of probability, bullying at least 2 other staff. He is a credible and proven risk. He cannot stop his behaviour, and upper mgt not only refuses to acknowledge the problem (choosing to slam me down instead), but supports and

nourishes the bully. It is at least foreseeable that that his next victim will not stop at suicidal ideation. Everyone I have contacted within the office has been told this, but not one person has even acknowledged the risk. Bullying is rife [REDACTED] Things are no worse than [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and that is totally unacceptable. The agency has a specific mission to treat its staff much better but they don't."

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

See above.

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?

"See above. Make Zero Tolerance of Workplace Bullying mandatory, in govt agencies for a start, and for them to act as an example for private industry to follow. Require every organization which has anything to do with mental health, then health in general, to employ AND PROPERLY UTILIZE at least one peer. And pay them a decent wage."

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?

"In theory, working for [REDACTED] is one option. In practice, I strongly recommend against this option."

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?

"Patient-centred care, and the adoption of the Recovery Model, in psych wards, would be a great start, especially if made mandatory."

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

See previous.

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

"Publicize the hearings more widely. Despite a strong interest, and close monitoring on Facebook, I only saw this process today, too late to attend any of the public consultations. Publish the findings widely. "