

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

SUB. 0002.0015.0041



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

Refer attached submission

**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?**

Refer attached submission

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

Refer attached submission

**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.**

Refer attached submission

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

Refer attached submission

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

Refer attached submission

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

Refer attached submission

**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?**

Refer attached submission

**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?**

Refer attached submission

**What can be done now to prepare for changes to Victoria's mental health system and**

**support improvements to last?**

Refer attached submission

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

Refer attached submission

## Formal Submission to the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System

[REDACTED] - Carer

I am the father of a son suffering complex PTSD as a result of extreme bullying and sexual assault at school when he was 12 years old. My family has lived experience of the issues confronting Victoria's mental health environment - I shun the word "System" as it implies a level of organisation and structure that we have not found to be there. I provide the following thoughts and observations and would be more than happy to expand on any or all of them by direct contact on [REDACTED] or email at [REDACTED].

## Awareness

There has been much done in terms of raising awareness of mental health in the community. I suspect that there is still a very strong element of "that won't happen to me - there's no mental illness in my family; I'm not famous, etc". The vast majority of government funding seems directed towards areas that the voting public think might affect them - counter-terrorism, crime prevention, physical accident, cancer, heart disease, etc. I certainly thought that way, but I can now attest that anyone can be thrust into the world of mental illness and if people thought that it could actually happen to them by random chance, then they would be more concerned about it, rather than just aware of it. I don't advocate a scare campaign, just the notion that it could happen to you through no fault of your own and you'll want a well organised and highly functioning system there to help you if it does.

## Caring for the Carer

The primary front line care for people with mental illness is their immediate family. They are also the most cost effective as they provide extensive 24x7 support for free. It makes good economic sense to ensure they are supported so that they are equipped and capable of continuing this free service rather than handing it off to external service providers through exhaustion and exasperation.

- Educate carers in what to do.
- Listen to carers when providing service - they are a far more reliable source of information about a mentally ill patient than the patient themselves, yet are routinely ignored with often fatal consequences.
- Provide respite from the unceasing demands of 24x7 care - have qualified mental health professionals come in to the home and share the carer for a day or two every few months, or take over for a weekend.