

Suggestions:

Tribunals and Complaints Commission

Mental health tribunal is woeful. People are not heard, decisions are made before people have even walked in.

I have been with people who have gone to the tribunal and you could see that the tribunal had made their decision before the person spoke. The tribunal needs to be accountable for their actions and decisions. The set up and the venue of the tribunal. On the tribunal there needs to be people from the community (what are their qualifications?), they need an intelligent professional person (I dislike the word consumer) who knows the system and has experienced it.

The whole setup and people on the tribunal needs to be changed.

The Mental Health Complaints Commission do not represent people with a mental health complaint. There is no honesty and they are selective about what parts of complaints are followed up. There was a complaint, a sexual complaint, that was not followed up, or even documented. It took from 2016 to 2019 and this complaint is not yet settled, but the Complaints Commissioner has closed it.

The MH Complaints Commission think that an apology is ok, but it's not ok because it's not meant and this is a formal process. Complaint can lead to you get nothing, but managers or workers get moved from services, but they are still being paid: like priest and principals- they do something wrong and just get moved.

Documentation and freedom of information

Documentation you ask to be put on your file, is not put on your file, it is tucked away: I don't know what they do with it? This is potent information. The documentation is not accurate. Freedom of information: people should be given access to their files immediately, for free. They shouldn't have to ask, it should be given straight away. They should have to pay or have the threat to pay.

Freedom of information should cover everything in mental health: medical, mental health workers, organisations and private psychiatrists and services. This needs to be acted on. This means freedom of information laws need to be changed. I have tried to change this, but I have been ignored. Government needs to change this.

MH workers need to be supported if they disagree with treatment of someone or raise issues of abuse. They should be able to do this without the fear of repercussion and reprimand.

The [REDACTED] or organisation, the group for people on treatment orders, need to provide real advocacy. Or a group needs to be set up so that all people have immediate access to real advocacy.

My letter of resignation from [REDACTED] and the MH system was not put on my file (2016).

Poverty

Stop poverty for people in the MH system and impacts on pensions. I have seen a lot of people encouraged to smoke for physical reasons. They can't afford it, it pushes them further in to poverty. I've worked in the system, I've seen rooming houses: two to a room. No privacy. It's a disgrace and a fire hazard when smoking in the rooms.

MH Act needs to be changes to ensure true accountability and justice.

ECT and advanced statements

Should be banned in Australia and seen as a crime. 5 states in USA have stopped it and some states in AUs (NSW and SA). A friend of mine has been given ECT to cope with her husband's addiction: so that she can cope with him.

Another friend: Advanced statement (worth nothing legally) saying no ECT. It meant nothing, she got ECT because her carer said she could have it.

Advanced Statement should be made legally binding, by lawyer. Currently psychiatrists can get around it easily.

Strengths model

I feel the strengths model is a good one. It builds strengths on strengths and supports education. It's about what people would like and not what they are told to have.

I was in a meeting at DHS in 2017 when I was in an accident. It was about holistic approach to MH: it's the whole: brain and the body. It doesn't work to split it up.

Workplace and workforce

No equity, if you have a mental health tag: workplace. You can lose your job if you let someone know about your history. You can also be assaulted by other workers. By law psychiatrist and other workers need to be accountable for their work, and their treatments and should be charged with malpractice by law. The way they word things makes it hard to legally do this. There should be a body to hear these crimes so that they are heard and documented and addressed.

I have some friends who are psychiatric nurses. They comment that a lot of people in there are there for drug induced psychosis. Then they are taken off the drugs straight away instead of being weaned off, if this was done they might not go into psychosis.

I question some of the workers who work in the system and in [REDACTED]. A person I saw was only there for a couple of weeks and they were running sessions and they didn't know about all parts of the system and other supports and tribunal. There are quite a few carers given too much of a voice. They dominate advisory groups. I know of intimidating managers who run these groups.

More support for peer workers. They can't be adequate in their role because they are closed, not enough support. Supervision should be by choice and not with line management, fear of bullying and abuse. Everybody should be treated with respect and dignity. Workers in hospitals need to be more accountable for supervision and document honestly and accurately.

Selection panels for workers in MH: human beings who are tagged as consumers should make up at least half of the selection panel for mental health workers. The whole system needs to be changed to be made honest and humane.

There is a huge lack of employment for people with mental health issues. Sustainable employment should be able, and people should have access to sustainable fulltime or part time work.

Prevention, stigma and the current system

I feel that many people with psychiatric conditions and have witnessed that trauma has caused their conditions such as bipolar, schizophrenia. We need to address trauma; this can't be addressed by MH services, but by the community. This would prevent attempted suicide.

They are saying all the time on the tv if you have mental illness go to someone. this is the worst advice: it leads to massive stigma and abuse in the MH system.

I have seen things happen, I'm lucky, I got out of the system, thank god.

Example: in 2016 a MH worker who was overseeing what had been done to me for a long time told me that "the CATT team crucified me". I was also told not to contact the CATT team for my own safety.

I feel sick going through Heidelberg- I can't bear it.

Stigma: I was having an operation at the Repat and one of my children came to pick me up and he said, "is that the mental place you went to?" I couldn't believe it. It was a nightmare.

Vertigan Report in the 90s about mental health did very little and people were left out on the streets as they are now.

There are not enough hospitals for people: and it is soul destroying being in one, I've been in Milui.

Not enough rural supports for people: this needs to change. And more supports in the metropolitan community.

People are stuck in their regions- they should have choice. Different regions have different rules, there should be one rule to keep it more accountable and just.

Interpreters should be available all the time for CALD people

All side effects of mental health drugs should be told verbally to people. A couple of young men when I was a worker, cried on my shoulder because the drugs caused impotency. This is probably a worse impact. I was also on this drug. I told the doctor I worked with. He was shocked. He worked in jails and said he should only be used for the criminally insane. I begged to be taken off it. He sat back and no. His name was [REDACTED]

After 8 years on the drug, I was humiliated: I dropped to the floor because of low blood pressure. They thought I was drunk. After 8 years I asked to go off the doctor said, "You are too aggressive to go into hospital". This was because I said I didn't want this drug anymore and I had had enough.

The percentage of people on psychiatric drugs means that obesity and diabetes should be checked: they drugs cause this. I know someone who only got diabetes because of the drugs. Diabetes causes gangrene. The treatment for checking this should not be part of this cost of the mental health plan. People should be able to go locally, not where they are told- long distances, many people don't have drive or have cars.

Rooming houses: ditch rooming houses. People should be able to get humane accommodation that is well priced and well maintained.

The police: their treatment of people with MI is criminal compared to how they treat criminals in some instances. They need to learn the MH Act if they are going to use it. MH workers and psychiatrists should not use the police as a threat against people they think have MH issues. There

does need to be a real advocacy group for people within the MH system that is honest, fair, and accurate.

I was with someone in a writing group and their grandchild came to her, and he said that he was told grieving was a mental illness by [REDACTED]. Grieving is not a mental illness. Australians need to be taught how to grieve.

When I was working in the hospital, a woman was drugged and raped at a night club. After a while she broke, she was taken to hospital. She was checked, the police got involved, she found out what she was drugged with. The psychiatrist medicated her, she was discharged and given no support. Some police don't know CASA exist.

If you do have a history of mental health and you are injured in an accident: the TAC go through all your files and claim you have always been that way. Then you are fighting TAC, no support for your injuries.

There should be support for the person going through the mental health tribunal- a witness to support the person.

Children on medication for depression the percentage is high. In Vic they are still giving ECT to children, they are close to banning it. And when I was teaching I had a little boy in my grade, I heard other teachers whispering that he was under a psychiatrist. It's shameful, like he had a disease. It shouldn't matter. You meet the needs of each child in the grade.

Mental health needs to be accountable for the unnecessary break up of families.

The psychiatrists wouldn't listen to anything. I tried to tell him how it started and he wouldn't listen. The Chief Psychiatrists needs to do something he does nothing as far I am concerned. "not my department" there needs to be line management to go to the top. This was in the old Act.

People feel more comfortable challenging the system now. This is a good thing. I think it is sad, you say something and you are made feel they don't care.

The community needs to change attitudes. Everyone needs to be supported after incidents, and certainly not by a CATT team. CAT team member came to me and said "I had a perception of you, but you are kind hearted compassionate person." It was a bit late. That wasn't documented, just verbal so it means nothing. There is fear and retribution in the system and people who do say something are accused of splitting the staff.

I wanted to talk to the GP away from my husband: I didn't get my sentence out and he called the psychiatrists and my husband. I lost every ounce of power I had left. This is how I entered the system. I was diagnosed and drugged. People need to be educated about domestic violence, not just psychiatry. They see the bruises, but they don't want to know. There are a lot of women experiencing domestic violence in the Austin and it's not addressed. This needs to be taken into account, addressed and changed by the system.

I said to a doctor why did you allow this to go on and let me now incorrect diagnosis? He said, "Power". Now I have a letter from him that I am none of those diagnosis. I have tried to get that put on my file at the [REDACTED].

I reported crime that was committed against me, both physical and sexual to the police. I told that because I was sectioned, the police wouldn't follow up. Just because you are sectioned doesn't mean you don't have a brain and don't know what's happening to you.

There are obviously people in the community who are sectioned and I had no idea that they have absolutely no rights as a human being to report assault and rape. The law has to change. No matter where you are, everybody has the right to report and have their report followed up regardless of their sectioning. The law has to change. I can't believe this is the fact.

Apparently you don't have the right to vote if you are sectioned in hospital. Everybody has the right to vote.

I kept saying that I felt like a part of the Stolen Generation. People impacted by psychiatry are part of a stolen generation and they don't need an apology, they need compensation immediately. There is no time for an inquiry- so many of these people are dead now.

I also read a MIND article about people who have gone through [REDACTED] and been traumatised in wheel chairs are being referred to MIND. [REDACTED] should be taking responsibility. This is a cost saving thing for government and [REDACTED]. This makes the process more fragmented for the human being. And people are being told they 'lucky'. It's called, "passing the buck".

Stop it being too late, because it's already too late.

People are not being told.