

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

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

The best way to reduce stigma is to talk about it more and normalise it.

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 system is currently not working. I can't get Supports from the local community because I have a psychiatrist so I'm excluded from services like Case Management, PARC and the NDIS. The CATT team are unable to assist me, there's not enough beds for mental health patients in public holidays, I lost my Mental Health Worker and Partners in Recovery Worker in the recent restructure. I complained to the mental health ombudsman but he has no power to actually make change only to communicate on my behalf. I just got turned down for the DSP although I meet the criteria because of my husband's wage. This just made me feel like more of a burden to him as I can't contribute financially. Every time I've put my hand up for help in the last year I feel like I've had it slapped. I've felt more disillusioned and more likely to self harm due to no supports being available. They also took Supports away from Carer's so I get no relief from looking after my two disabled children. "

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

As above. The system isn't working.

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.

Currently in Victoria the system is being restructured so no one knows what services are available or for how long. I have lost all my Supports with has severely impacted upon my mental health. The confusion of how the new system will work and what the NDIS does or does not cover is causing our family great stress.

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

N/A

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

Why have they taken away Supports for Carer's? Why is Respite no longer allowed? Just because my children have ndis plans doesn't mean I have Supports? More Supports for Carer's to keep families together and to strengthen resilience.

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

The sector is understaffed. There needs to be incentives to joining the industry but I hate that they have made the courses free. This has made the caliber of support worker staff available go downhill and in some cases down right dangerous

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?

There needs to be more programs. For example in my area EACH is running a support Group for Carer's of people with Borderline Personality Disorder yet there's no group for people with BPD. That makes no sense. I find it difficult to source appropriate groups and even harder to attend them because of my mental health.

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?

I want to use my Mental Health Nurse to help me in my recovery but under Medicare there's no way for me to claim him. Add Counsellors and Mental Health Nurses to Medicare. Increase the amount of MHCP sessions. Ten is not enough. Supports for Carer's.

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

N/A

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

I suffered a nervous breakdown last year because of the burden of my disabilities on my family and the zero supports I was able to access. The CATT team told me to stop calling and I've been unable to access any Supports available in my area either due to my husband's wage or the Supports I already have that I'm paying for. It's ridiculous that I need to leave him and cut off all Supports before I'm deemed worthy of help. It's demeaning and has made me feel like there's no point trying to help myself.