

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

## Organisation Name

N/A

## Name

Miss Katherine Campbell

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

"Consistent challenging of stereotypes surrounding mental illness-public education, highlight the devastation mental illness can cause & the indiscriminate nature of mental illness- its ability to affect anyone from any walk of life. Mandatory protocols and interventions for mental health practitioners/nurses etc, identified to be ""burnt out""/at risk of ""burn out"". "

### **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?**

"Promotion of mental health charities/organisation through the use of celebrities/well know persons is currently working well. In regards to prevention of mental illness and supporting people to receive early treatment and support, there is much confusion, frustration and difficulty surrounding accessing early treatment and support, much is not known about early intervention supports and often many services operate on a triage basis due to lack of financial means and other resources, meaning those who are seeking early intervention aren't provided with a service until they are more unwell. "

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

Promotion of helplines in the event a person is experiencing suicidal thoughts is currently working. Increase of the number of after hours/24 hr services available to those experiencing suicidal thoughts/family members and friends. Simplify the process for a person to access appropriate assistance.

### **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.**

"Finding and accessing mental health treatment in Victoria is exceptionally difficult, frustrating and often occur too slowly. The majority of pathways to mental health treatment occur too slowly, and on a triage basis, often turning away unwell persons. "

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

Lack of mental health resources and public education fuel poorer mental health. Injection of appropriate funding and services would be necessary

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

"Support for carers/family members needs to be easy and simple to access, contain supports that have extended hours and crisis option. Caring for someone with a mental illness impacts every

part of a persons life and can create enormous strain if the right resources and respite aren't available. Particular emphasis on counselling and respite services provided for family members/carers needs to be addressed. "

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

"Those in the mental health workforce today are overworked and 'burnt out'. The lack of financial funding and limited number of staff create constant strain and burden on an already struggling system. There is simply not the resources available to properly assist each person with a mental illness so staff become overworked, overburdened and eventually leave the metal health workforce. In order to attract, retain and support the mental health workforce financial funding must be increased and support services made available to the mental health workers."

**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?**

"Some organisations have social groups organised. In terms of economic participation, many people with a mental illness feel if they choose to disclose their mental illness to a potential employer/employer they will be viewed negatively or incur some form of stigmatization. More opportunities for social and economic participation need to be generated and advertised."

**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?**

"Adult in-patient units: the severe lack of funding means many who require crisis treatment are unable to obtain it due to the constant burden placed on adult in patient units. Staff are overworked and 'burnt out' which is often interpreted by patients as a lack of caring about or concern for the patients mental health. Designated female only areas in adult in-patient units, would be hugely beneficial to women experiencing mental illness who have a past history of trauma."

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

More funding and increased public education regarding how to get help early for mental illness.

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

People with mental illness today still suffer much discrimination and stigmatization often at the hands of uneducated persons.