

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

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Name



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

Continue to talk openly about it in politics and the media in non-judgmental ways whilst simultaneously calling out instances where judgement is placed on an individual based on their mental health status.

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?

"-Initial presentations to hospital ED; for many people, the thought of going to the hospital because their mental health has reached a critical point is not an easy one. As a Social Worker, I have worked with young people who have described suicidal idea"

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

"Individuals deemed at a lower risk of suicide are being sent home from hospital, or they are going to their local GP, finally getting that mental health plan and then after going through all of that ? they are not making those psychology appointments or not wanting to go back to the GP because they have simply prescribed anti-depressants without discussing options for talk therapies. These individuals are still struggling daily with their depression and a hospital admission is not good enough or a mental health plan is not good enough/long enough. "

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.

"-Access to psychology and psychiatry ? financially affordable, longer term options. -Ease of understanding of services available to the community -No continuity of care between professionals and services, for example, public health Psychiatry results"

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

"-Education around access to the system, social stigma etc."

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

"- Communicate with them; regular care teams especially at the initial stages of admission to hospital and then throughout changed to behaviour and medications. My family would have to insist on a care team otherwise we would not be aware of what was being put in place to treat my family member - a care team still only occurred 3 times over about 1.5 years. - Doctors and Psychiatrists need to utilise the family members expertise prior to understanding and treating the patients. No Psychiatrist ever asked my family their knowledge of my sisters mental health

concerns, history and did not take into account our knowledge of her potential undiagnosed Autism Spectrum Disorder."

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

"Higher salaries, safer work environments, more appropriate centers for patients based on diagnosis and need."

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?

"-Assist in the better management of their medication and review in order to mitigate their symptoms. My family member was moved to a new anti-psychotic, starting on a high dose, the resulting side effects included a heart rate of 180-200 which required beta-blockers, weight gain has now reached 50kg and smoking cigarettes was ignored/not managed which has now resulted in ulcers in her oesophagus. The side-effects are not managed, the medication is not reduced without family pushing to have it reviewed. My family member is no longer experiencing psychosis and this is considered a win and now she is left to the community on a DSP with a very low ability to be a part of the community due to the side effects of the medication. "

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?

"-Improved communication skills towards patients and their families from treating staff. -Easier more streamlined access to help and support for patients and families ? including in instances when the patient is not willing to participate but the famil"

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?

"-Post-discharge care and follow-up, including medication reviews and family consultation -Issues with not having an alternative to SECU that was able to house individual's that would be at serious risk to themselves or others ? dual diagnosis in-pati"