

Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System

Phone submission taken from [REDACTED] on 13/05/2019.

I have already been through the Royal Commission into Sexual Abuse so that may give you a bit of an idea of what I have been through. For me there was a real lack of guidance and understanding when I was young and experiencing mental health issues. I left school before I turned 13 years of age. I had trouble controlling the basics. When you are so fragile you don't know what to do. I was 11 years of age when it came out about my abuse.

I set myself on fire when I was 13 years old. I don't even know if I was trying to hurt myself. I don't remember even planning to do it. My mother had Bipolar and was institutionalised, I grew up without any one caring. I didn't know people cared about other people.

When I was 17, I was homeless and staying at the Salvation Army. Another homeless person was trying to coerce me into prostitution.

I had an epiphany one day and it was a turning point for me. I was living up in Harvey Bay and I noticed when I used a loud voice with my dog that he would cower. It reminded me of how I was as a child, how internally frightened I always felt, I cowered. I vowed never to raise my voice at my dog again, ever.

I have made a few attempts to take my life. I got into the system in 2009, admitted to [REDACTED] Hospital following a deliberate overdose of Insulin. I remember the psychiatrist that saw me prior to my discharge said, "you'll be fine". Six months later I did the same again. I took 600ml of Insulin, but I was just screaming out for help. The public mental health ward at [REDACTED] is a scary place.

I'm lucky I have found something else to focus on. I do stand-up comedy and I'm writing children's books. Do you know how many words there are in the English language that end in ted? So, this is the basis of my books. What kind of Ted are you? There's one about a ted that wears glasses and his name is ShortsighTED. There's another who has a crush on his friend at school and his name is InfatuaTED and another called AccepTED, this is once he accepts himself. There is also exaggeraTED and contradicTED. I'd like to use this idea of the Ted's to reach out to children about feelings and problems. We need some early childhood awareness. I wasn't seen as a child. I didn't get any help. I had to find my own way of coping in an imaginary world. It's incredible what you can do with your imagination.

There were 60,000 people that came forward to give evidence in the Sexual Abuse Commission and only 100 people were paid compensation! There were three things I was hoping to achieve from the Commission: Recognition – I wanted to be believed, I wanted closure and I wanted compensation.

I did see a private psychiatrist at [REDACTED], but I found that more damaging than helpful. I did get a diagnosis of Bipolar. I was initially bulk billed but then he started charging me. There was a general lack of understanding and compassion. I also have suffered with PTSD and disassociation. It's all symptoms of the trauma. The biggest issue for me was my diagnosis wasn't early enough.

I would like to say that a stay at PARC in Deer Park was a helpful experience. I also saw a counsellor at Relationships Australia named [REDACTED] and she was outstanding. Wattle Place – Lost Australians was a great support to me.

My counsellor taught me years ago to work on my internal dialogue and it really helped me. I would say to myself, "Thank you, I appreciate you, I'm okay." Simple hey? I have another idea for my books, and it's that before we die we can pass a baton, but what baton do we pass on? Compassion? Anti-

racism? Love? Understanding? I try to make people aware that there is a better life in reach. When people ask me if I feel better, I say, I'm better than that, I'm happy.

I write songs and there's a line in one of them "I didn't want to live, now I don't want to die."