

20th June 2019

As a member of the Victorian community I put forward to the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, the areas that most matter to me. These matters have come to me through my personal experience as a wife, mother and grandmother to those, in my family, who experience mental health illness.

In your inquiry please:

Consider the important theme that has been inherited by Victoria's Mental Health System of:

"Acquired mental health illness " caused by the Institutional Child Sexual Abuse phenomenon.

The recent Royal Commission into Institutional Child Sexual Abuse, pointed out the failures of the Institutions who were responsible for crimes against children. Since having it's failures pointed out by the Royal Commission, it is now time for the Institutions named, to make amends to the Survivors and the Community for the damage they have caused across generations of our citizens.

Mental Health illness rates amongst the highest levels of reported damage to Survivors.

Understandably, over the years this has had a considerable impact on Victoria's Mental Health System.

To date, to make amends for their past crimes against children, I am not aware these Institutions have contributed to the Victorian Mental Health System. They continue to rely on the Victorian Community to provide and fund this particular mental Health care.

It is time now, for these Institution to be an integral part of the Solution for healing: by connecting with the funding of Mental Health management and mental health wellness, to those who have been harmed by Institutional criminal abuse. It is a time too, for these Institutions to desist, from financially leaning on the Victorian Community to fund this particular care. This debt rightfully belongs to these named Institutions.

I respond to your questions around Solutions for healing Mental Health illness:

1. *Value the input from Mental Health Advocates. Listen to their stories. Act on their recommendations and insights. Personalise the stories drawn from all cultures and regions of our country.

* Create programs of wellness and inclusiveness.

Overcome the sense of abandonment. (The church leadership is blind to the harm it has inflicting on survivors).

* To remove stigma and discrimination experienced by Survivors of Catholic Church abuse, The Melbourne [REDACTED] needs to let go of it's legalistic approach to Survivors by eliminating the mentally destructive Melbourne [REDACTED]

2. Sorry to say, from my lived experience over the past seven years of mental health in my family I can recall few events that went well:

**"Family Drug Help" phone line was a tremendous support at a crisis timer for myself.

* A placement in a Drug Rehabilitations Unit at short notice for our son was of immense support at that time. This placement was achieved through his case manager.

What can be done better?/ Prevention:

*Media education around Mental health to the community. Promote healthy lifestyles, wellness. Provide a wider range of affordable activities within sport, the arts, outdoor, community social events across the ages.

*Support for Early Treatment: A phone "hot line available 24/7 to speak with an actual trained person to advise the next step forward. No recorded messages please.

*Encouragement, through media etc to connect with their General Practitioner is a healthy way to commence investigating the way forward for anyone concerned about their mental health.

3.Prevention:

[REDACTED]

The above paragraph is private as the [REDACTED] Court is mentioned.

Prevention :

Have actual people to answer a "hotline" 24/7, no more recorded messages, this is not helpful.

4/ What makes it difficult to experience Good Mental Health?

* Those who work closely with Survivors of Institutional Child Sexual abuse repeatedly inform us that the harm done to these now adults is multifaceted (multiple addictions, drug abuse, unemployment, homelessness and more).

*Our young couple are both Survivors of serious Child Institutional Abuse. They have a young family. To sustain this young family's mental health to an acceptable level of wellness has been overwhelming and ultimately we failed.

*Three years ago I made a list of Family services, support services , connections (good and not so good) the family were connected to, the number being over 30.. Many of these services operated Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm. The emergency services were in frequent need outside these times.

Survivor Support group.
Mental Health Unit.
Mental Health Hospital.
Law Court.
Police Service
Rehabilitation Units X3.
Family Services. X 2
Dept.of Child Services.
Pastoral Care Parishes x 3.
Psychologist.
Food Bank.
Money 3.
Spurs. Account.
Banking Institutions.

Emergency accommodation
General Hospital Emergency
Solicitors x 2
Children's Law Court
Ambulance Service
General Practitioners x 2
Early learning Centre
Religious Order for 6 months
Primary School
Local Council support services
Cash Converters
Drug supplier
Centrelink

Absent were:

Counselling to resist applying for Bank Loans
Assistance to reduce power bills
Employment.

* Some Survivors of acquired mental illness will need a range of mental health care for life.

* Linking of services with the added support of a case worker.

8./ opportunities to improve social and economic participation:

* Provision of training programs.
Mentoring program.
Re-skilling for new employment opportunities.
ESL provided
Financial counselling
Mentoring for money management.
Education
Mentoring or life skills

9/ Prioritise for change.

*The number of counselling sessions provided per year needs serious review and be extended from 10 sessions per year to 20 sessions per year.

* The Fee structure for counselling, to be reviewed. Out-of-pocket expenses for multiple family members, needing mental health care, are making a negative impact on families already under distress.

* If we are serious about better and readily affordable mental health care, the two above points must be addressed to have wellness return to these families.

* We hear of, for example, sports personal who step back from their career for a time because of decline in their mental health and to embark on a program of healing. Often, happily, they are back to their career and healed in a relatively short time. This an example of a successful healing program and is to be emulated.

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