

Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System
PO Box 12079
A'Beckett Street
VICTORIA 8006

Tuesday 2nd July 2019

Dear Commissioners,

I write to provide this formal submission to the above Royal Commission on behalf of *Mindful, centre for training and research in developmental health*, The Department of Psychiatry, The University of Melbourne.

Mindful is the only specific Child and Adolescent Mental Health teaching and training centre in Australia. Since 2007 I have led what is a unique partnership between the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services [the funding body providing an operating grant], The University of Melbourne, Monash University, the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists [RANZCP] and the Victorian Tertiary Mental Health Sector.

The mental health and wellbeing of young people has been increasingly recognised as one Australia's most pressing issues. Building community awareness, addressing stigma, improving access to care, **building a capable and responsive workforce** and service system reform are all critical to improving the mental health outcomes for children, young people and their families.

**This submission will address question 7-
*What can be done to attract, retain and better support the mental health workforce, including peer support workers?***

The Mental Health service system needs a capable and responsive workforce to better meet the changing needs of the community. A key element of workforce recruitment and retention is **support for** and **access to** appropriate ongoing training.

Mindful has been clear that all our teaching and learning activities must be informed by evaluation of the evidence that underpin psychiatry and that our role as the state wide educational unit is to facilitate the acquisition of up to date skills and knowledge and to support the lifelong learning for all professionals working with children and young people across health, education and welfare.

Mindful has been providing a range of training options- formal postgraduate degree courses, professional development courses, specific workshops and supervision to a broad mental health workforce including psychiatrists, paediatricians, allied health, nursing and professionals working in education and welfare sectors.

In the last 10 years over 1500 professionals have completed postgraduate courses at Mindful and more than 10,000 have participated in training workshops in various aspects of child and adolescent mental health. To further build capacity across the mental health workforce we have also encouraged and supported interdisciplinary

clinicians (allied health and nurses) in broadening their scope of practice and embarking upon higher degrees. This has occurred through providing a step wise progression and linking from professional development activities to higher degree courses at Mindful.

This however is not enough and there are ongoing challenges.

Challenges for MH services-

1. Workforce shortage especially in rural and regional areas putting ever increasing pressures on staff
2. Workforce maldistribution across metro and between metro and rural also add to the pressures in certain areas
3. Increased service delivery pressures that make it difficult to support the release of staff to attend training
4. Limited funding from organisations to support training

Challenges for professionals-

1. Training often needs to be self-funded
2. Time taken to do further training needs approval from services
3. There is no formal recognition [eg increase pay] from services of training that increases staff skills and knowledge
4. Access to training can be difficult for rural and regional clinicians

Challenges for Mindful –

1. Static Funding—the grant from the Mental Health Branch, DHHS has remained static since 2007 whilst the need and costs have increased.
2. Limited resources [people, time and funding] to look at innovative ways of delivering training to reach a geographically scattered workforce eg online options

What's working?

There are examples of where limited investment has produced widespread changes that directly improve mental health workforce capacity.

1. Since the 2009 Victorian Autism State Plan Mindful received specific [albeit intermittent] funding [\$104,000/year] to support subsidised training of mental health professionals in ASD assessment, diagnosis, identifying mental health comorbidities, and interventions for children and young people with ASD. In 2018 over 1000 clinicians attended training many from interstate.
Result - the capacity and capability of the Child and Adolescent MH workforce is so much better than 10years ago and more children and young people with ASD are receiving care in mental health services. Mindful is recognised as the centre for providing quality training in ASD and we are continuing to expand our ASD training options.
Challenge- there is no ongoing identified funding from DHHS to support subsidised training beyond this financial year despite both the obvious need and the great uptake.
1. Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Initiative. A significant gap was identified in appropriately trained specialists in this area. A combination of state and commonwealth funding for specific training in Infant Mental Health for Child and

Adolescent Psychiatry Trainees and Paediatric Fellows was made available to Mindful who liaised with appropriate services and enable 6 –12 month placements. Approximately 5 positions per year have been available since 2012. This scheme has not only seen individual clinicians trained in this important subspecialty area but it has had the ripple effect of building capacity across the system as these clinicians have gone on to take up key roles in mental health services as Consultants Psychiatrist and Paediatricians. Many more infants and their parents are being seen in our services since this scheme commenced.

Conclusion-

There needs to be targeted and sustained investment to build the capable and responsive mental health workforce that Victoria needs. Some of the infrastructure to do this already exist, such as Mindful, which can be further build on. In contrast Mindful experience a progressive attrition of base funding relative to current and increasing costs and uncertain funding in already established areas of specific need.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback to the Royal Commission and taking the time to consider this input.

If you require any further information, do not hesitate to contact me on 9371 0203.

Kind Regards,

Assoc Professor Sandra Radovini; MBBS. DPC, FRANZCP, Child Cert
Director of Mindful, Department of Psychiatry, The University of Melbourne

Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist
Orygen, The National Centre for Excellence in Youth Mental Health