

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

Organisation Name

N/A

Name

Miss Rebecca McCubbin

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

"I believe in order to improve the community's understanding of mental illness and reduce stigma is to educate the general public on mental illness. A lot of people hold the perception that mental illness is "just in your head" they don't fully understand the way a mental illness can impact you fully... both mentally and physically. It also should not be perceived as a sign of weakness and instead viewed as an actual illness like any other illness, just because it can't always be seen does not mean it isn't there or not real or an actual illness. The public needs to be educated on how a mental illness is an actual illness and how the person suffering from one should not be blamed or made to feel ashamed. I believe educating children in schools both at a primary and high school level about mental illness would be a good start and also would help the next generation of people to be aware and also more understanding and likely to receive help for themselves if they develop a mental illness. More campaigns should be made too for the public. [REDACTED] is more of a fake bandaid fix... what about the other 364 days of the year? GPs also should be more educated on mental illness as well and help with supporting patients and families/carers. "

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?

"Not much in my opinion is actually working well. The system has and is failing a lot of us suffering with a mental illness. What is kind of working well is that we at least get 10 Medicare rebate able sessions to see a psychologist on a mental health plan and organisations such as Headspace which I believe have made such a huge impact on helping young people with mental illness. Unfortunately Headspace only caters up to 25 years of age and a lot of funding has been cut. What needs to be done to better prevent mental illness is to educate the public about it more so early warning signs are picked up or people can feel less ashamed to seek help. Headspace needs more funding in order to hire more staff so there is less wait list times to see someone. Another organization needs to be established to help those older than 25 too. I believe there should be more funding into mental health, GPs need to be more educated in mental illness and also more than 10 sessions need to be granted on the mental health plan for people with more complex and severe issues with mental health. 10 sessions is nothing! it doesn't even cover a whole year if you were to see a psychologist monthly, people with severe mental health and complex issues need to see their psychologist more than 10 times a year. People need to be desperately educated on mental illness to eliminate the stigma and shame so more people can pick up on signs and also be less ashamed with getting help. There also needs to be better access to Psychiatrists, some charge way too much money and most mentally ill patients are more likely to be unemployed and unable to pay these high fees, there should be a cap on the amount they can charge, some charge \$190 some \$700! "

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

"Nothing in my opinion again is working well to prevent suicide. A lot of mentally ill people are more likely to be unemployed and therefore less likely to be able to afford to see a Psychiatrist and their psychologist after the 10 session mental health plan limit has been reached. So they are less likely to be able to receive help. Also the public is not educated on mental illness well leading to stigma and people feeling more alone. Services like Beyond Blue, Lifeline, Headspace and Kids Helpline I believe are good organizations and do make some impact on helping with suicide prevention, but people are still too ashamed to seek help from these services. The CAT teams (Crisis assessment and treatment team) are a shocking and appalling service in helping people with mental illness. They have made me lose faith in the system. Some of the mental health nurses working for the CAT team are kind and understanding and educated in mental illness but a lot are not. You get a different team sent out all the time and some have been very uneducated, rude and have abused mentally ill people in need who are vulnerable. I had this experience myself with the northern CAT team. I had mental health nurses physically assault me and harass me and further push me to feeling more suicidal saying untrue things about my family to make me feel more upset, they also abuse their power and have been illegally placing people in psych wards by doing illegal assessment orders (Not explaining that they are doing one, not giving you a copy of the order and also not giving you a copy of your rights which is all legally required in order for it to be made legal) unfortunately this is happening a lot, people who become mental health nurses need to be more trained and educated in mental illness, a lot of us are vulnerable and they abuse this power. No short courses should be allowed in order to become a mental health nurse, screening should be done to ensure the right people are hired for the job that are not in it just to make money and abuse people who they believe they can get away with doing. Then people would be more trusting of using the CAT teams. "

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.

"It is in my opinion that costs of seeing Psychiatrists and psychologists is too high and therefore preventing a lot of people from being able to afford getting help. There should be a cap limit on how much a Psychiatrist can charge some are charging \$700 for an hour! A lot of mentally ill people are more likely to be unemployed. Also 10 Medicare sessions on the mental health plan is a joke, people with severe mental illnesses or more complex issues need more than 10 sessions! There should be two categories 10 sessions for people with mild mental illness and 20 sessions at least for people with more debilitating and complex mental illnesses. Also GPs need to be more educated on mental illness, a lot are ill informed and do not help or support you well. The GPs at Headspace are amazing as they are specialized in mental health, general GPs who do not work at Headspace are not. Headspace has long wait lists to see their GPs and only cater up to 25 year olds. All GPs should be trained and educated more in mental illness. A lot of Psychiatrists and GPs are also engaging in malpractice around helping those with mental illness. Prescribing dangerous medications like lollies and quick to want to diagnose your condition in one quick session without getting to know you well leading to a lot of misdiagnosis. Stigma is also still a big issue and the public definitely again needs to be more informed and educated. "

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

There is not enough funding or local services provided in the area. Also the public needs to be

more educated as well as GPs.

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

More support services should be offered to support them. Services to better educate them on what mental illness is and how to better support and understand what is happening to us who have a mental illness. counselling services should also be offered to help them.

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

"More extensive training and education should be required for those working in the field especially mental health nurses and those working for the CAT teams. GPs need to be educated better on mental health and understanding it. GPs and Psychiatrists should be made to learn more up to date treatment options other than medications some of which are dangerous like benzodiazepines and not be allowed to hand them out like lollies they need to be better educated on the dangers of some of these medications. More communication should be established between GPs, Psychiatrists, and Psychologists. "

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?

"Those of us living with a mental illness are also impaired with physical illness or chronic pain. More funding should be provided for help with treatments to help combat these physical illnesses. The Chronic Disease Management plan offered to give you 5 medicare rebate able sessions is not enough for those of us with chronic pain issues and need extensive expensive treatments and to see specialists. Having anxiety can lead to a lot of tension in the body, I have to see an osteopath and pelvic floor physiotherapists to help with chronic pain problems this is expensive and 5 sessions is not enough to treat a chronic issue. Being pain free would make it more easier for me to be able to find employment and work. Also educating the public on mental illness to help reduce the stigma would make it easier for us to be able to socially participate and also educating employees on mental illness would make it easier for us to be employed or to not be taken advantage of and end up more stressed in the job. "

Thinking about what Victoria's mental health system should ideally look like, tell us what areas and reform ideas you would like the Royal Commission to prioritise for change?

"There should be more funding to the mental health sector. GPs and the public need to be more educated in mental illness and its impact on people to end stigma and receive proper help and treatment. Psychiatrists should be capped at how much they can charge per session. More sessions should be given on the mental health plan than 10 for people with more complex and severe mental illnesses such as at least 20. Mental health nurses need more training and investigated in their abuse of vulnerable mentally ill patients and illegal assessment orders being done. Psychiatrists and GPs need to be investigated into malpractice especially in terms of medications being prescribed like lollies that are dangerous and a lot of misdiagnosis. Psychiatric services that are private like admissions into psych wards should not be only on the top/gold cover range of private health insurance, that is too expensive most mentally ill people are unemployed. Centrelink need to be educated into mental illness more and be more understanding and helpful

instead of treating us like we are frauds. "

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

"More educating the public on mental illness to end stigma and make people more likely to therefore receive help, More funding and more sessions given on the mental health plan than 10. More training for mental health nurses and GPs. A royal commission should certainly be conducted and Psychiatrists, mental health nurses as well as GPs need to be investigated for malpractice and abusing mentally ill patients. "

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

"There is alot of malpractice going on with GPs and Psychiatrists in misdiagnosing people and also prescribing dangerous cocktails of medications out like lollies such as benzodiazepines. They believe that medications like antidepressants are the answer to everything and are ""happy pills"" this is not the case. There are other treatment options out there that are not been offered instead medications seem to be the go to and only treatment they are willing to offer. The mental health nurses that work for the CAT teams also need to be investigated for abusing vulnerable mentally ill people just like aged care workers are now being investigated for abusing the elderly."