

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

Organisation Name

N/A

Name

Mr Fairley Wijesinghe

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

"By bringing awareness through people who continue to battle but not won the war, but keep going. Engaging people with experience to talk about mental health (depression/anxiety) Educate the communities that are most vulnerable to be stigmatised (western society somehow has better grip on this) Offer services and treatments locally and not just the psych wards or mental institutes- (this adds to the stigma) "

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?

"Unsure as to what is working well, however there are several methods that can be adopted, if not to prevent but to spot the early signs. Mental illness can start as early as in a mother's womb, or develop later on, that needs to be discussed and dialogue with not just the qualified but with the experienced.. theory and science is not sufficient. Talking with people who have been through it themselves or a loved one are the best equipped to answer this question. Not just a panel of psychiatric experts."

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

"Unsure of what is working well, my experience was that the 2 recent times I came pretty close the coping mechanism I picked up while being hospitalised (Private Hospital) helped me prior to that nothing other than the state of mind prevented me on an attempt to take my life. (Happy to discuss this) What does not work- Happy to discuss if you are interested and I am contacted. (I am a current volunteer with Dr Alison Asher (Monash Health Suicide Prevention))"

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.

Close the huge gaps- once again happy to discuss.

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

"Communities, with varying values, there is so much that is needed to know and understand.. thinking varies and society dictates.. however speaking of Anxiety and Depression from experience I have a lot to say and contribute. "

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

One of the most if not the most important is this.. support through education and caring for the carer. The hardest when the person going through the illness has no one that understands them

and tries to help them.. believe me all the love one receives ain't enough.. the patients need empathy

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

Apart from the usual fair pay and safe and secure working conditions.. people in this industry have a calling and need ongoing training and every possible support- qualifications yes but not always a requirement This is a 24hrs workforce and has to be an undertaking.

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?

Working in communities but also bringing the different cultures together through simple gatherings of varying interests. People with this mindset need to belong and not feel alone. Once again happy to go into detail if contacted.

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?

Easy access to medical practitioners and counsellors (24hrs) bulk billing to counsellors.. the gap payment prevents a lot of patients seeking this service. Having trained volunteers available for this (24hrs) until the qualified professional help etc Can be further discussed if contacted.

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

"Lots can and NEED to be done.. that's why you need people who have experienced or battle with this disease, not just academics on your panel of inquiry it has been one of the slowest processes in the system and in the meantime lives have be lost and ruined forever for the loved ones left behind. All findings to be made transparent and get people moving.. I believe the funding is there but ?? there doesn't seem to be much action and it is very frustrating especially when you are volunteer to make a difference. Before we think of lasting we need to get started, and keep going with ongoing improvements as things evolve benchmarking with other countries that do it better or have got it right."

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

Yes I would like to express myself better through face to face communication and dialogue. We need to fix this.. there are major gaps and the battlers and people dealing with a loved one with a mental breakdown are unsure of what is available or if it is available?