

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

Organisation Name

SUB.0002.0028.0398

N/A

Name

Anonymous

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

" Equitable access for the Australian public to professional psychological services. Specifically my recommendations- request is for: (1) The abolition of Endorsement and the Two-Tiered discriminatory Medicare Rebate System (2) Overcoming the perception that General Registered Psychologists were inferior to Endorsed, and a message from the Board to Medicare denouncing that myth would level the playing field. Currently, both parties state they do not have the power to do this. (3) Overcoming the current dynamics whereby the Board had failed in its duty of care to all Psychologists in allowing the APS Clinical College to denigrate General Licensed Psychologists to statutory agencies (such as Centrelink, DVA, WorkCover, and Insurance Companies), culminating in the exclusion of these Psychologists from referrals for assessments and reports. (4) Addressing the lack of understanding by most parties in reference to the concept of Endorsement that is invalid and non-standardised, and cited AAPi research which found that 42% of surveyed Endorsed Psychologists (on the Board's database) did not have the qualifications required of Endorsement. (5) Carefully examine the APS membership numbers. The APS has artificially inflated their membership numbers to hide the emigration of their members to the AAPi over the past twelve months. For example, as I did not officially resign the APS prior to May 2019, I am counted as a member despite not being provided membership as I have not paid my fees. NOTE: APS (in their annual report this July) will no doubt claim to have retained 24,000 members, they will do so by not de-registering members who have left. Several of their members who have resigned in favour of AAPi membership have reported they can still log in to the APS members-only portal using their former usernames and passwords. (6) Acknowledge the AAPi as a genuine Peak Body, and ensure all relevant parties work with them the same as APS. "

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?

The option for the public to choose how to seek support. EG Private health insurance rebates Psychological sessions and Medicare also rebates some support. (Note these are both now at risk of being compromised) Therefore remove the stigma to being referred under Medicare. Calling in a Mental Healthcare Plan often scares people off. Department of education and other professional employees will not access these services as it will be recorded on their employment record - therefore they decline to receive the funding and often are financially restricted in how much support they can afford.

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

"Public campaigns that highlight the need to be aware of others potential psychological vulnerability - Create easier access to real support - some current services such as headspace promote they help but their criteria for support is so tight that the majority can't access the support they need. Teen-youth support is sadly not addressing the real issues. Drug affected clients

cannot obtain appropriate rehabilitation or detox. They wait months for a place and they often give up. Sadly a proportion of them actually Overdoses or become dealers. I have personally watched many clients and their families suffer due to the lack of appropriate services to address these very real issues. It is not that the individuals don't want help, it is that the help is not available - meanwhile, key bodies(service providers) are advertising to the general population that they met the community needs."

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.

"Lack of appropriate education, social stigma, and lack of appropriate resources. Australian psychological training has limited itself to a small option in treatment protocols that on the world stage are not the gold standard. Medicare only allows limited sessions on a very narrow range of treatment protocols - both of which according to international research fall short of making lasting effective change. As this is what is offered and it doesn't provide anywhere near what is needed, people give up believing they can't be helped. The failure rate is high and then it is attributed to the practitioner or the individual when it is the system that has failed. The APS is the key body that has perpetuated this falsehood and it appears all bodies believe they are the gold standard when in fact according to international standards, they are far from adequate, let alone excellent. The world laughs while we blindly believe we are doing a good job!"

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

"Give the power to bodies that truly want to make a difference for all Australians - not just perpetuate the businesses of an elite good of ""Clinical Psychologist"" half of which were never appropriately trained, while another quarter have less than 5 years of professional experience, meanwhile the experienced non-clinical psychologists are being disempowered to even service the needs of these seriously in-need vulnerable individuals."

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

Education and support for all the family. Each member has different needs and yet the limited support is given only to the individual diagnosed and the rest of the family are excluded from support or education. Education and support for all in need. Clearly identifying what works and following that.. Not using biased research that is driven by people with an agenda that does not support the greater community.

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

"Abolish the tiered systems. Provide opportunities for equal employment to all professionals. Evenly remunerates all professionals. Paying someone considerable more \$ because they have been in a role longer, is not based on any research. Paying someone more money because they are aligned with a specific ""clinical College"" and discriminating against the majority of the workforce because they don't have that alignment. Note it is not a qualification, It is an endorsement that they paid for."

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?

"Sadly very little.. They are stigmatised and trapped in limited services that do not really meet their needs. A range of service centres dont meet their needs and often people are abused and more traumatised by the poor services, so most dont engage."

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?

"Medicare abolish the tiered system Increase the amount of rebated sessions Increase the ease of referral processes. Often GPs required multiple paid visits before they will allow a referral and often will only refer to their chosen psychologist that they are strategically aligned with - often within their own practice, therefore inadvertently benefiting from funds being spent within their practice. GP should refer more easily and not attempt to control where people go. Lift the stigma within certain workplaces such as Education from recording if an employee gets a mental healthcare plan. I wonder what would be done if it was made socially acceptable to actually take preventative measures to ensure mental health was maintained instead of waiting until the damaged is done and then trying to fix what is broken. "

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

"Change how things are portrayed. Make it socially acceptable and even reward people for pro-actively engaging in preventative measures. seriously look at international countries where mental health is better and explore what they do.. clearly, its plastered all over facebook every day - so would not be hard to find real evidence.. Ask real questions that get real answers - stop allowing biased stakeholders to control what doesnt work. "

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

Redistribute the power. Invest in what really works and stop funding what doesnt.