

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

## Organisation Name

N/A

## Name

Major Kevin Walsh

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

Suggestions to improve the community's understanding of mental illness is to include informed discussion in the school curriculum. To include concepts on non-violent and respectful validating communications in the school culture including in its disciplinary policies. Wider community acceptance may be helped by organisation's having procedures to include people with mental health problems including specific plans for people with reported or identified needs.

### **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?**

There are a number of community based self-help groups that have arisen to address perceived shortfalls in the MH system. These should be approached and if necessary supported to provide the community support which is essential to recovery. The interface between those with mental health issues and Centrelink is problematic with some conditions having symptoms such as avoidance which almost guarantees they will breach and have their benefits cut off which can lead to homelessness.

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

"I believe easily accessible peer support that is readily available and which is focussed on recovery and not avoiding suicide and that triggers adequate social support. We try to fix big problems with band aids to save money. There is no stitch in the old adage ""A stitch in time saves none."" "

### **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.**

There has been an erosion of Social Capital. This has been an unconscious process caused by our busy lifestyles. We need to purposefully rebuild this Capital. There needs to be greater efforts to join up services and to provide smoother navigation of the system.

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

In my opinion stress isolation and alienation are the key drivers of poorer mental health outcomes. In the drive for economic efficiency people are treated more like numbers and not as people. This has not been helped by exploitative behaviors by some in positions of high trust such as the banks. We are also in a period of rapid change and it is easy to feel lost and isolated in such circumstances.

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

**them?**

Carers need to be seen as part of the solution and a valuable resource and included in recovery. Support groups should be provided to reduce isolation of carers.

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

Those in the system who express an interest in becoming a peer worker should have a mentor appointed to encourage this.

**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?**

"Employment services, life support services and life coaches could help but often the strongest help is the belief that they can solve their own problems which can help the development of self belief. But this is not passive strategy with self sabotaging behaviors addressed and engaging with consumer's even when they don't feel like it. It is my observation that mental health workers incline towards passivity and rarely appear to be driven to achieve recovery."

**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?**

The system should research the social conditions that are leading to the current high rates of mental health issues. It should have a centre for mental health disease control that investigates causes and prevention methods. Mental health hygiene should be taught in schools. Responses should address the issues in their community context with recovery being more than treating the symptoms. The primary health care networks should understand how to facilitate navigating the system including how to access phsyco social support. Artificial caps on services provide a barrier to providing adequate support which should be determine by need and the science.

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

All current community providers should be assessed to determine what they are doing and what is their benefit and capacity. This should be done in a validating way. They should then be mapped onto a comprehensive support network concept and introduced to related agencies. This network should have sufficient capacitu to address the identified need. Gaps in support should be identified and suitable service providers supported to fill those gaps.

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

Mental health is s community problem and all members of the community including business have a role to play in addressing the problem.