

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

Organisation Name

N/A

Name

Miss Danni Mills

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

"In order to reduce stigma and discrimination I think mental health services and general health services should not be separated. I ask the question, "why should illnesses of the mind, be segregated from illnesses of any other organ in the body?". Until we do this, I believe there will always be stigma and reluctance of people suffering mental illness to seek treatment. "

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?

"I think the awareness raising around anxiety is working well, the stigma is reduced around this and people are more likely to get treatment and support. I think that GP's (The initial point of contact with the patient) need to prescribe the patient to learn and practice mindfulness rather than prescribing an antidepressant. The anti-depressant is a band aid and does not address the root cause of the problems, which are the thought patterns in the person (patient). "

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

"I think there are some good social media campaigns that are quite good around getting people to speak up and seek help (especially men) and breaking the stigma around that. Things that can be done better to prevent suicide include: - Better access to Telehealth services with psychologists and psychiatrists so that people don't have to wait 6 weeks to get into see a mental health professional. - 'Call lifeline' simply doesn't cut it and it needs to be backed up with better access to mental health professionals (not just physical access but financial access). - GP's and mental health professionals need to work more holistically with the patient so they are treating the body, mind and spirit of the person not just giving them medication. People cannot recover from mental illness with medication alone. They need to work on diet, meditation, exercise, having purpose in their day. - In terms of preventing suicides within acute psychiatric facilities I believe these facilities are disgraceful in terms of not providing enough structured activity for the patients. They lock them up, feed them drugs and give them no mental stimulation, no games, no exercise, no purpose. Any "sane" person locked up and treated like an animal in a psychiatric facility would become suicidal after living in the conditions these people live in. "

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.

"- Poor mental health almost always stems from poor inner belief systems which have been formed in childhood. - More work needs to be done around improving the quality of parenting and reducing childhood trauma (not even big trauma, just bad parenting). "

What are the drivers behind some communities in Victoria experiencing poorer mental

health outcomes and what needs to be done to address this?

" - generational poverty, domestic violence, addiction, unemployment, better access to affordable fruit and vegetables, put a tax on junk food - Telehealth services (video calls in GP clinics) so people in rural and regional areas can speak to a mental health professional quickly and easily. - each of these need to be addressed in order for peoples mental health to improve. "

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

'- education and support workers to help them understand the root cause of the problem.

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

"give them better conditions, adequate staffing numbers. "

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?

"the opportunities are the same as for people who don't have a mental illness. the person with the mental illness just needs to do a lot of hard work on eating well, challenging old thought patterns, applying mindfulness, meditating, staying connected in the community. "

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?

" - Mental health workers (case workers, recovery clinicians, mental health nurses etc) need to educate the patient that they will only stabilise their mental health condition if the combine medication with lifestyle changes, most importantly focussing on the improving gut health (heal the gut and you will heal your brain, the evidence is very widespread), along with practicing mindfulness. - There is far too much focus on medication and nowhere near enough focus on other lifestyle factors. "

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

N/A

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

"I have Bipolar disorder which was out of control for 15 years. I have been held against my will in mental health facilities and my mental health fluctuated so badly even though I took my medication daily and didn't take any recreational drugs. I live in a regional area (Traralgon) and struggled to see any therapists, telehealth services is what saved me, in addition to seeing a naturopath which enabled be to address the root cause of my condition and get my gut health and thyroid functioning properly which has stabilised my moods. I am healthier and happier than ever now. "