

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

Organisation Name

SUB. 0002.0025.0105

Name

Anonymous

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

"Learn about it more in schools. I'm not sure what it's like now but we didn't cover much about depression and anxiety in school at all. Teach students about different types of mental illness and don't just throw a blanket "'drugs will fix it'" rule over everything."

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?

"Headspace is amazing. Keep funding headspace, get more GPs there, encourage young people to go there for information not only on mental health but sexual health too. Those GPs are beyond incredible. Create services similar to Headspace for older demographics also. "

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

N/A

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.

"The cost of seeing a therapist is a real issue for the average person. The ten sessions of a mental health plan do help, but it is not nearly enough for the pricey therapy. Also, limiting to ten sessions makes you feel that you must stick with the same counsellor you start with even though they may not be the right help for you. It could take 3 or 4 sessions to feel comfortable or realise that they are not the right person to help. The whole GP system is broken. I have sought out a mental health plan multiple times in my adult life. The first time I wasn't feeling right, felt tired all the time, wasn't very happy. I went to see a private doctor, who asked me about my life, I worked full time, I had started studying, I was still quite young. He basically told me that everyone feels this way, asked if I need a medical certificate for the day and sent me on my way. I didn't know to ask for a mental health plan, and he didn't recommend it. A little while later a friend of mine who had recently dealt with CFS told me she was seeing a therapist and recommended her to me. I went to another doctor who I specially asked for a mental health plan and they did give me it to me. I didn't like this therapist much and as an intern making very little money I felt, even with the rebate, the sessions were too expensive for me to continue. It turned me off therapy for many years and ultimately made me feel that again I was just whinging and wasn't really in need of the services. At the age of 24 I was extremely depressed. I got to a point where I would wake up exhausted each morning, wanting to cry and not wanting to go to work, I'd rage at my partner for no good reason, I didn't want to see people, I hated myself and was convinced I was going to accidentally burn the house down and that I was incompetent and would lose my job. I would sit at work staring at the screen not being able to focus on anything for more than 30 seconds at a time, I'd want to run out of the room constantly, I felt like I had 100kg on my shoulders all day every day. I spent

weeks googling symptoms and everything led me to depression. One Saturday morning I forced myself to go down to Headspace. They told me I had to get a referral, but they would take me in. I went to a local GP, a family bulk billing clinic. The doctor had a student doctor with him. I explained to him how I was feeling and that I was always anxious and that I was a software developer and student and had bought my own home. He gave me a questionnaire (Goldberg I think) and then, in front of his student asked me to tally up the results. When I was a bit slow to count as I was anxious, he told me that they have better education in India and Australian's are bad at math. He then looked at the result which was EXTREMELY high. He tried to convince me that I probably didn't feel that bad and that I could make some of the numbers lower. You have a good job and a good family, you own a house, you can't feel that worthless. I left his office with my plan but feeling so defeated, embarrassed and upset. I haven't gone to a regular GP regarding my mental health since, and I will be putting it off if I ever have to again. The psychiatrist at Headspace diagnosed me with chronic major depression. Thank God for Headspace. Without them I don't know where I'd be right now. They were able to give me my next mental health plans and gave me AMAZING therapists up until I was 26. Unfortunately, now I am too old for their services and I am not sure where I will go if I relapse. "

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 case I am a young person with already underlying anxiety who was then expected to work crazy hours for little pay just to get noticed and keep my job. There are young people who finish their degrees and then are forced to cling on to any tiny offer they're given to just get experience. Its really tough not to fall in a trap of feeling unworthy and depressed. Especially when management might not be up to scratch. Encouraging a less intensive working week or flexible hours for all Victorians would be the dream.

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

N/A

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

N/A

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?

N/A

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?

"Awareness and training for GPs on how to deal with people seeking help. More funding and awareness for services such as Headspace. They are ALWAYS short staffed but have the best therapists and GPs I've ever dealt with. I wish I had gone there ten years earlier. Services like Headspace for adults. I feel like I'm left out on my own now that I'm not a young adult anymore. I don't have the funds, time or knowledge of how to find therapists who are as caring, compassionate and good at their jobs as Headspace. More awareness in schools I had

depression and anxiety probably since I was in primary school but I was able to hide it from my parents and I didn't know what I was feeling wasn't normal. I wish I had learned at an earlier age how to identify the signs and that there may have been someone at school that I could've gone to talk to. "

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?

"This royal commission is really great, and I hope that some things change for the better. Thanks to Headspace I have been able to turn my life around and I hope that if I become unravelled again Victoria's mental health system is in a better state to accept me back in."