



## Commission update – August 2019

### Public hearings come to a close

Last month, the Royal Commission heard from more than 90 witnesses during four weeks of public hearings. Thirty of these witnesses were community members: 18 specifically spoke about their lived experience, and 12 were carers and family members of people with lived experience.

The hearings were conducted at the Melbourne Town Hall, with additional hearing days in Maryborough on 15 July, and the Aborigines Advancement League in Thornbury on 16 July.

Below is an image of the Welcome to Country from Aunty Di Kerr at our dedicated hearing day for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



The hearings provided an opportunity for the Commission to examine a broad cross-section of the mental health system. The themes for the hearing days were stigma, prevention and early intervention, access to and navigation of the mental health system, carers and family, rural, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, LGBTIQ+ and culturally and linguistically diverse communities, community resilience, suicide prevention and prioritisation and governance of mental health services.

During our hearings we heard compelling evidence in relation to these themes from a wide range of people, including farmers, politicians, refugees, police officers, community leaders, mental health professionals, carers, academics and people with lived experience.

We heard many powerful and personal stories that reaffirmed that mental health challenges can affect anyone, at any time, from any walk of life – but also that people can live contributing lives with proper mental health supports and services in place.

We heard about how the current mental health system is broken, the gaps between GPs and crisis support, and the missing middle. We were struck by the commitment people have to ensure change not only for themselves, but for their fellow Victorians.

There was also an overwhelming sense of hope for the future and for the work of the Commission.

You can read transcripts, witness statements, and my opening and closings statements [here](#).

You can also watch this [short video](#) to hear from some of the witnesses at our hearing day in Maryborough in the Central Goldfields Shire, where we heard about some of the unique challenges facing regional and rural communities.

## **Submissions**

Between 18 April and 5 July 2019, we invited Victorians to share their experiences, views and ideas on how to improve Victoria's mental health system.

We received more than 2,500 submissions from people and organisations, which include a range of perspectives from people with lived experience, carers and families, the workforce, mental health and other organisations.

The submissions covered a wide variety of topics, reflecting the breadth of the terms of reference, the range of experiences in the community, and the complexity of the factors that influence the mental health system.

Many organisations and individuals went to great lengths to develop their submissions. Some were supported by extensive consultation and surveys with their networks, and others included artwork, excerpts from personal diaries and video content. The Commission really values this input and the time that people have taken to share their ideas.

We have started publishing formal submissions online and will continue to upload more over the coming weeks. You can read published submissions [here](#).

## **Interim Report**

The evidence we heard during our public hearings, along with submissions, input during community consultations and other inputs to the Royal Commission are now being used to help us prepare our interim report. The interim report will be delivered in late November this year.

## **Keep in touch**

Follow us on Twitter ([@RCMentalHealth](#)) to stay up to date with our latest news. You can also contact the Commission by calling 1800 00 11 34 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm) or email [contact@rcvmhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:contact@rcvmhs.vic.gov.au)

## **Penny Armytage**

**Commission Chair, Royal Commission in Victoria's mental health system**