

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

## Organisation Name

N/A

## Name

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

N/A

## 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?

"TALKING about mental illness is working the more we are all talking about it seems to take the stigma away, this is already happening (slowly) but could be done bigger. R U OK day works I see and hear so many people behind this and even social media is a buzz with R U OK young and old. Television commercials, radio with real people wanting to talk about real life issues, this is something we need more of. We need to begin with empathy for the things and those who we don't fully understand. Whether this takes the form of a quick post on social media or a late-night conversation with a loved one in desperate need of support, simply speak up. Speak out. Be heard. Show love. Listen well."

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

"I don't think anything is working well to prevent suicide so far. I have listed below some ideas on things that could be implemented in mental health, I know a bit about this as I have lost my son to suicide so have been through the system. "

## 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.

"Sometimes people with mental health issues are unable to access some of the supports needed to help move them forward such as psychologists/ psychiatrists because they can not physically get to them, some of these people do not even want to leave their home, they can over medicate or not medicate at all. WHAT IF there was something that could be done at the patients end by their doctor in the way of a medical link to a site or an app- or something that the patient can agree on (or not) that accesses a check in service (for patients that won't or can't get to appointments or just to check in on ) like the nurse on call-we do it for mothers who have just had babies why not something for people with mental health issues? Some of these people have no one, the company of talking to some one and getting one-on-one assistance is also an amazing boost to a persons mental health. People help people! Skype services are only available to patients who live very remotely. It would be good to see this expanded as a option for others who could benefit from the service. Buisy lives make it hard for people to experience good mental health, we worry about everything else but ourselves. I have lived through my son being admitted to hospital for mental health issues and wishing he wasn't alive, he was admitted into hospital after he took some pills and when he woke they asked if he would stay so they could keep an eye on him, he said no- People with mental health issues should not have that choice sometimes next of kin need to be

able to make that call. ANOTHER THING THAT MAKES it hard is that there is never enough staff in the mental health area, headspace- my son waited to see some one and in the meantime took his life, I was told ""they were busy and tried to call him but no answer""-how about they contact me his mother? it never happened, I was also told ""he didn't seem like someone that was going to take his life"", how did they know that? they were very wrong. Better training needs to be done in mental health treatment and support staff and these people need to have the time to spend with the people with mental health issues. Each service should link like they do for MY GOV, so as professionals can see everything fully laid out on the person needing assistance. People are concerned about the idea of leaving people without proper support in a time of intense emotional crisis, I know I am. Also Limiting mental health plans to 10 appointments is unacceptable. When people experiencing a mental health issue reach out for help, we need to have a system that reaches back, I had to see 3 councillors before I found the right one after my son passed away. Everyone is different and every experience is also mental health plans need to go for a lot longer and hold on for long enough to help them get back on their feet. GP's need to be better educated in mental illness. They need to provide adults, parents, adolescents and children with education, information and referral to services that are specific to their needs, not just writing up a quick health care plan and sending them on their way. Navigating mental health services can be very overwhelming to people experiencing mental illness, additional assistance in accessing services could be the difference between getting help or not."

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

I think the government is actually onto this one quite well and seem to know the areas that are high with mental health issues and poor health outcomes.

**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?**

Training and knowledge is the key and empathy in any area working in mental health. Days to train (paid training) several times a year to gain more knowledge in the mental health Industry. Holding on to honest workers that have commitment to their jobs and allowing them to input into the industry. Don't make it such a hard place to get a job (peer support workers) there are great people out there wanting to work in this industry but sometimes the training etc prices are out of reach.

**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?**

## **What can be done now to prepare for changes to Victoria's mental health system and support improvements to last?**

"Education - We need a counsellor/psychologist (for example) in every school. Supporting our young people to know early in life that we ALL need help at times. We also need to teach social and emotional wellbeing. More funding so schools can have the resources they need. ALL schools! Education- with children in primary schools and high schools. Many of them are already living with parents (or no parents) or have a family member with a mental illness, As we know the statistics are around 45% of us are living with mental health issues. By helping our children realise what it can look like can help them be more resilient, more compassionate and understanding and could possibly stop the discrimination in future generations. Many children are also suffering traumas, from family mental illnesses or have had these passed onto them. ADHD for 1 example is usually diagnosed in school-aged children and is usually called a behaviour disorder but as the child grows older it also comes under mental health issues these children grow up to become adults, they find it hard to work, get jobs keep friends, survive. That is what we are looking at a lot now. These children are getting lost and not coping in school. I had a friend tell me that her daughter that has just started high school was told she would only go to year 10 as she couldn't cope to year 10, how does the principal know this already before she has started school-because statistics tell her? By helping to educate these children before they become adults-by putting in specialist programs into schools (in each suburb, or where needed ). For example the child would go 2 days a week to the specialist class either in their own School (which I think is the best idea as there would also be other children suffering mental health issues)- or somewhere nearby where other schools could also access for children needing assistance, then the other three days they would be in their own school with their friends. Teachers with other training in mental health, etc would work with the students to find the best ways to help them cope and then educate schools and teachers as to best help and work with the child to help them feel confident. the program could branch out to also assist families etc. There is a place in Frankston North (the Pines) that is working with children as noted above, there needs to be more of these in more suburbs it is called the ""Student Development Centre"". "

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

" Instead of trying to fix it when it becomes a problem, I think it needs to start being addressed at a school level and educate children on how they might feel if they start to suffer symptoms of any mental health condition and what steps they can take to help themselves if it happens to them. It would work towards reducing the stigma around it and people wouldn't feel like it wasn't normal to feel the way they do. More funding for schools so they are able to provide services & support for students. Statewide awareness campaigns/ workshops to help people recognise Mental Health & strategies on how to support those with mental health issues. More support for carers. We need a counsellor/psychologist in every school. More animal assistant dog programs are needed to help those with mental health issues, I have seen this work with students in schools that are having a lot of mental health issues."