

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

Organisation Name

N/A

Name

Mr Mark Stanley

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

"A continuance to normalise the prevalence of mental illness in the community. "Mental health" issues were once attributed to people who walked through parks yelling at trees, however current marketing of the mental health issue demonstrates that it's very much an 'every person illness'. This needs to continue at a rapid pace."

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 personally think a large portion of mental illness comes down to an inability for people to cope with their basic function in today's society, rather than some unprecedented increase in mental predisposition being experienced in society. From my own trouble, and those I speak to people about it, I think it may be largely environmental, partly socio-demographic and then others (just my observation). Given the suicide rates among men particularly, I'm not sure any of it is working. In regard to treatment, the affordability is a MASSIVE issue. I'm seeing someone tomorrow evening (psychologist) and the gap is \$100 or so. I'm being charged a total of \$207 p/hr for the consult. When I was told that, I could have hung up and thought 'fuck that' or I don't have the money for this as would be the case for many which I don't. My GP doesn't bulk bill, so I'm finding a gap of \$100 in the morning to see her for an assessment, then another \$100 to see the psych in the evening. I have 10 funded visits under a mental health care plan which will still cost me close to \$800, not to mention my GP FEES! I can understand how as the black dog is upon you and you need the help you might as well just top yourself. I really can empathise."

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

"I'm not sure anything is 'working' to prevent suicide as the rates are at record levels. Amongst men, what I do know is the courts ruling automatically in favour of the women in separation cases and over-riding men's rights is playing an enormous part in men's suicide. Children being removed from their fathers on the word of the women etc. This isn't my situation, but I have many friends in this situation. Some of which I have had to talk back from the edge. The family court system is fucked and needs a complete overhaul."

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.

"One "experiences" good mental health when life is good. Largely environmental factors are responsible for the change. Of course you have drug users, alcohol abusers etc which experience an external ignition source for mental health, but in my opinion the majority is environmental. Most people I know don't know of the services available, and unless you have a very thorough and diligent GP then you may go undiagnosed and untreated. People need to know the services exist,

and maybe need not rely on a GP to administer them."

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

"Drugs Alcohol Boredom Selflessness No community activities (for the young) Parents who are guilty of all of the above In my opinion, anyone just needs to feel they're a part of something. Worthy. A contributor. Have their confidence restored. I believe a vast amount of mental health issues will repair if we address these things. "

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

You'd have to ask my wife

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

You'd have to ask someone in the field

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?

"Art, music, community groups (no religious)"

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?

Services! See my answer about affordability!

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

Don't know

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

"Yes. I am a music producer and small business owner. Im 49 years old and in the wake of the bushfires in Gembrook, Victoria, march 2019, I embarked on a community project. I offered to record 1 song each for 10 unprofessional musicians in the hills area to try to offset the sadness on social media from the bushfires. They submitted their songs to me via email. Literally dozens of them, and I chose 10 What I didn't expect to find from this new group which Im just getting to know, is virtually every one of them has a mental health issue. They range in age from 15 to 53. Their stories are varied but intriguing . They are not professional musicians, just people in the community who happen to have a song I can record for them as a part of this community album we're making. I find that staggering! These 10, and their producer are all battling some kind of mental issue."