

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

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Name

[REDACTED]

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

"I feel there needs to be a panel of medical personnel alongside family members of the patient before any decisions are made to HOW they will be treated/ medicated. I've lost a brother to suicide because of a mental disease, and my Mother also had a complete nervous breakdown in her 40s and now suffers from severe Alzheimers and ramifications of treatment from before... ie shock treatment. People need to have a VOICE.. there needs to be more funding by the government put into workshops, publicity, school programs to educate from early, and general public awareness of this very prominent illness in our community."

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?

"Obviously there are campaigns which now give men a chance to also speak about depression and anxiety, something that was shunned upon previously. That's a positive step. Then in professional areas, police force, army... people are coming forward about their mental status. Continue to build on these and expand into other sectors too."

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

"Like I said, I lost my brother to suicide... back 20 yrs ago there was very little support. His Psychologist basically told me : his will to live has gone Why wasn't there something more that could be done?? Why wasn't a strategy talked through with our family?? It was cold and horrible!"

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.

"Good mental health needs to be TAUGHT, and how to maintain it through our various stages in life. It's like growing up a baby, you'd be better if you had a checklist or manual of what to do/ not to do along your journey. Hospitals, clinics and GPs should ALL be inter linked when a patient comes for help. They should be supported., And given avenues of help."

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

"Certainly communities where funding is less, western suburbs, more foreigners, low income families, the mental health crisis is on the uprise.,. Therefore these hotspots need to be located and mental health groups put into place to support the community "

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

"We need more easier access to inform about mental health issues, doctors in our areas, ways to

deal with emergencies if they arise unexpectedly, the does/ don't s in particular situations. There should be more free services for family/ carers counselling, psychological, respite."

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

"Better training and definitely higher wages, because unbalanced and unwell people in the community is unproductive. Trying to cure them and stabilise them in their homes BEFORE sending them to hospitals is the best bet."

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?

They pretty much get cut off from society if their councillor or psychologist or psychiatrist doesn't offer them information about support groups.

Thinking about what Victoria's mental health system should ideally look like, tell us what areas and reform ideas you would like the Royal Commission to prioritise for change?

"Once someone is diagnosed with a mental illness, immediately a action medical plan should be put into place. Therefore, everyone involved with that patient should be able to follow everything from beginning..."

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

Mental health patients should be categorised into a special filing system and there should be a way to monitor progress/ deterioration in their condition.

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

"Doctors/ health professionals should be held responsible if they are NOT sharing everything with the family/ carers as far as medications and treatment is concerned. Too often The patient/ doctor privacy laws prevent this, but this law should be abolished. Patients with mental illness should have their family/carers in charge of decisions. "