

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

**Organisation Name**

SUB.0002.0025.0035

N/A

**Name**

Anonymous

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

"Urgent changes to Australian state Family Act to protect persons with serious illness. Under the current Family Act in NSW a widow is entitled to 100% Superannuation and Life Insurance and an automatic approx \$500,000 then 50% of all remaining assets. Children born with serious illness have no legal financial protection in a parent's estate despite assets being able to ensure a greater quality of life for persons most vulnerable. No amount of lifetime assurances or support is legally recognised in the event of disputes. In 2016 my father unexpectedly died and the conduct of the widow was appalling. Despite being married for 5 years at the time of my father's passing, they did not live together until she started moving in to his Sydney penthouse 98 days prior to her switching off life support. The day my father collapsed from myocardial infarction, he was carrying her furniture into his penthouse. His widow switched off life support and only contacted me the following day to inform me my father was dead. His widow refused to allow me his death certificate, refused autopsy, refused me to view his body prior to cremation and withdrew funds from his accounts, and she concealed his including car, jewellery and other family heirlooms. The information she provided in her affidavits were false and she willingly committed perjury without penalty throughout the entire ordeal of NSW Supreme Court appearances. As it stands, a widow is the highest recognised person in an estate despite demonstrating their own assets and personal wealth is in the millions and have no dependants or needs be it financial or otherwise. Biological children then divide the small remaining portion of their parents estate despite enormous needs. My father donated his blood for required transfusions during critical surgeries, yet the widow disputed my father even having a relationship with his children and destroyed his Will so his children couldn't assess it or locate it as he had only kept a copy in his bank safe which she emptied within hours of his death. There is no national registry for Wills which allows some deceitful persons the ability to destroy copies without penalty as children are unable to obtain proof through locating copies with law firms if parents didn't inform them. In total the assets of my father would have been upwards of \$4-6 million and I received less than \$500,000. I showed great cause and fulfilled every legal requirement and still the law protected the widow regardless of conduct, concealment and perjury. My legal representation also breached their contract by representing my brother despite conflict of interest and as I was suffering a panic attack and was struggling to breathe my brother refused to pay his legal fees and deducted the amount from my settlement despite me informing my solicitor of breach in representing both siblings. Under his contract, if at any point there is conflict he could no longer represent my brother yet he was unwilling to do so as he was seconds away from receiving \$140,000 himself. I was alone in the room with my brother threatening me and a solicitor who did not protect my interest despite it being his duty under the contract. I was earlier told by my barrister that the widow could drag out the settlement hoping to cause harm to my health so that if I should die she would benefit more. No person born with serious illness, physical or mental, should be placed under such intense pressure they are compelled to settle out of fear of threats. Despite my brother having a 15+

estrangement from our father, full time employment, a wife with full time employment and owning homes and other assets, I was pressured and threatened by him and as a result am still the only person who continues to struggle. The Federal and State laws need to protect the most vulnerable persons and permit them a greater quality of life and this can be achieved by making changes to the Family Act. No person suffering physical and mental illness should be left at the mercy of others with no legal protection and suffer months or years of brutal legal challenges. If the Family Act changed it would provide immediate legal protections. "

**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?**

"Through GP, persons can utilise the mental health scheme which provides 10 free sessions each year but really needs to be greatly increased for persons needing many more sessions, particularly when devastating events occur and support is imperative."

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

As above; early and ongoing access.

**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.**

"Remote areas require greater care, resources and expertise."

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

Poor attitudes within professions; toxic management and appalling staff attitudes are having enormous impacts on patients. I've been privileged to be in the experience of both patient and nurse and I have witnessed some horrifyingly bad workplaces where staff have abused patients and co-workers. An overhaul is needed but is highly unlikely to ever occur as it would cost the public and private facilities enormously.

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

"Family members and partners can often be dismissed due to poor attitudes of staff. While it's constantly purported to be a collaboration, it's still very highly toxic particularly due to nursing staff attitudes and environment."

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

"Financial increases, acknowledgement, encouraging greater diversity of persons with greater personal understanding and first hand knowledge as opposed to theory based knowledge and much greater attention and regulations should be paid to toxic management and floor staff who continue to manipulate or abuse for personal gains at the direct expense of others."

**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?**

The greatest and what should be the easiest financial protection is changes to the Family Act to

allow persons of great need to be financially protected and allow them a greater quality of life.

**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?**

"Management. I've witnessed appalling discrimination, biased, manipulation and abuse. I've known HR to delete complaints via Riskmans as the information from public hospital goes to the government and they have been concerned of having funding scrutinised if it was known that senior staff were abusing other staff members or staff abusing patients."

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

Changing the structure of management by implementing departments for actual reviews and sources where staff can report issues without fear of unemployment. The vast majority will not submit complaints due to fear of retribution and issues remain. Staff shouldn't become so entrenched that they feel entitled to abuse the workplace eg senior staff sleeping through night shifts as there are no witnesses and junior staff fear causing waves or management hiring friends to manipulate staffing numbers and have support when required.

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

"Vulnerable persons need protecting at all levels; legal particularly via the Family Act Law, patients needing more ongoing sessions via increase to the 10 yearly sessions and patients in hospitals need greater care via stricter overiewing of management and staff attitudes and conduct. Hospitals also need to implement greater standards for staff to protect patients and selves from violent outbursts. "

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

**Organisation Name**

SUB.0002.0029.0243

N/A

**Name**

Anonymous

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

"Greater inclusion. Greater formalised education in childhood and adolescents. Eradicate toxic bias in the workplace and universities by implementing stricter standards, protocols and education. Establish greater actual and measurable standards of staff conduct throughout the education, university and health care systems. Accountability and actions for toxic organisations, facilities, management, senior personnel and individuals reported manipulating and breaching conduct regulations and policies. Independent departments where individuals can report breaches and offences without fear of retribution through threats, unemployment, diminished shifts, harassment, bullying, victimisation and ostracism."

## **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?**

"Early intervention and assistance through accessing GP mental health treatment plan, providing 10 government subsidised mental health sessions each year. Increase the yearly number of government subsidised sessions. Greater psychology and emotional support for vulnerable children already accessing the health system with serious physical illness including ongoing aftercare to assist with reducing lasting traumatisation and the reducing the risk of ongoing mental health issues. Workplaces valuing and employing individuals in peer support schemes with actual personal experience. "

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

Early and sustained support through increasing the yearly government subsidised mental health sessions. Eradicating toxic management and individuals with bias and prejudice. Employing individuals with actual knowledge and experience without bias or prejudice.

## **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.**

"In recent weeks, burnout became recognised and accepted as an actual mental health issue. Providing greater independent access and care outside of workplaces where individuals can discuss workplace trauma, harassment and bullying in confidentiality without fear of retribution. "

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

"Organisational harassment, victimisation, bullying and ostracism in the workplace and universities contribute greatly to ongoing mental health issues. Independent departments need to be established where individuals are able to report without fear of retribution."

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

"Urgently making changes to the Family Law Act by providing automatic financial security to children with serious physical and mental health needs. It is both unjust and outrageous that widows can greatly profit through manipulation and deception due to the current structure of the Family Law Act. Biological children with serious physical illness and mental health issues are not protected under the Family Law Act and they continue being at risk unethically. It is not reasonable to assume a parent would not provide for their child with great needs in death as they had done in life. It is not reasonable to rely on parents having Wills, particularly in incidents where a widow has destroyed their Will for greater personal gain. Individuals with serious physical and mental health needs should never be subjected to legal and financial burdens due to the Family Law Act not providing adequate protection. A widow of great personal wealth, without any financial needs whatsoever nor any dependants who then also commits perjury and obstruction throughout without any penalty, should not profit from the death of a person at the great expense of a biological child with needs. The only way to establish this is through changes to the Family Law Act. Australian Law needs to protect and support vulnerable individuals from persons and organisations seeking financial gain. The Australian Law/Society needs to allow individuals with needs greater time to lodge complaints of unethical conduct, breaches or practices performed by solicitors/barristers etc."

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

"Independent departments who have the ability to eradicate toxic behaviour and practices in management and senior personnel who manipulate the hiring process for personal gain. Independent departments where individuals can report breaches, harassment, prejudice, bullying and ostracism without fear of retribution. Employing individuals with actual knowledge and experience."

### **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?**

"Urgently making changes to the Family Law Act by providing automatic financial security to children with serious and ongoing physical and mental health needs. Financial security will provide individuals with the opportunity and ability to improve their quality of life in all areas; housing, nutrition, medical assessments and treatments, medicines, various supports and education."

### **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?**

"Eradicate toxic bias and prejudice across management and senior staff from workplaces and universities. I have personally been subject to or witnessed within workplaces and universities; physical assault, sexual/harassment, victimisation, bullying, prejudice and ostracism. Without exception, across every hospital and facility both public and private I have endured and witnessed harassment, victimisation, bullying, prejudice and ostracism by management, senior staff as well as other staff members. Confidentiality was routinely breached by XXX' University lecturers who discussed multiple patients eg Has anybody heard of the Australian singer X'? Maybe your parents would have heard of X', they have a colostomy'. While undertaking Bachelor of Nursing at

XXX' University, three students in my discipline committed suicide. I was personally threatened, harassed and victimised by an independent clinical educator employed by XXX' University who took no action when it was officially reported to them. After immediately reporting incidents and requesting a transfer to complete clinical assessments at an alternative location and with an alternative clinical educator, it was rejected and dismissed by the university faculty and then later ignored. Workplaces continue to promote and employ toxic cultures. Management and senior staff continue to operate in unethical and biased ways and employ or promote friends or persons they are friendly with who have no experience, understanding or knowledge of specialised units. I have witnessed harassment, bullying, victimisation and ostracism greatly contribute to staff burnout, self harm, self destruction and suicide amongst colleagues. An acting manager of a child unit promoted grossly inexperienced staff to senior roles and employed grossly inexperienced staff. Hiring was done through bias towards individuals perceived as friends or friendly towards their views. Staff who reported incidents were targeted and dismissed through underhanded and manipulated means, while those considered friends or friendly made false claims were rewarded with personal employment gains. Within a child unit, staff including senior staff and management would regularly discuss inappropriate topics relating to their own body image, dieting, unhealthy weights and strategies while their vulnerable clients were present, some of whom already had eating disorders or anxieties surrounding nutritional intake themselves. Staff of a child unit were routinely physically assaulted by clients with management stating 'It's part of the job here'. Some clients were so physically aggressive security had to be deployed to the unit 24 hours a day with all other clients having to be discharged as staff could not assure anyone's safety. A shift leader was stabbed in the eye from a child patient and management provided no support. Hospitals grossly lacking self defence training and policies to all staff with no basic standards across the state/country. Rostering remains the greatest tool used to manipulate and dismiss undesirable' staff. I have witnessed rostering routinely being manipulated for the benefit of friends' and detriment of others. Management manipulating interviews and hiring processes eg personal experience with a manager who advertises a position and interviews candidates only to reject all, then shortly afterwards offers their chosen candidate a short term contract which they can then manipulate again at any stage for unethical or unfounded dismissal. HR delete official complaints via Riskman so government does not receive them. HR routinely manipulates and dismisses issues by concluding 'unsubstantiated' and stating rostering is not a form of bullying'. After receiving, dismissing and/or deleting official complaints found to be 'unsubstantiated' over approximately an 18 month period, a public hospital was required to undertake an independent investigation into workplace complaints. A senior staff member was immediately terminated following the findings but no acknowledgement or apology was given to the employees who had been subjected to physical and sexual assaults, harassment, bullying, prejudice and ostracism within the toxic workplace. Stricter and regular assessments of management conduct and practices. Stricter and regular assessments of senior personnel conduct and practices. Independent departments for reporting breaches by managements and senior staff without fear of retribution. Stricter regulation, accountability and penalties of real estate agents and solicitors/legal firms who pressure, abuse or manipulate vulnerable persons for financial gain."

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

"It has been widely reported that the current mental health system is broken, while the health care culture remains toxic and an requires urgent overhaul. Toxic entitlement is entrenched throughout all areas and impacts the mental health of all its victims ie staff and clients. Staff complacency and

entitlement is toxic and needs eradicating."

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

"Urgent changes are required across every aspect; Family Law Act Eradicating toxic management and senior staff from workplaces and universities. All vulnerable persons should be protected from financial, emotional, psychological abuse and changing the Family Law Act will ensure no person is left vulnerable to the greed or manipulation of others."

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

**Organisation Name**

SUB.0002.0030.0001

N/A

**Name**

Anonymous

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

"Greater education throughout all levels of schooling, universities, employment and society. Employ and seek recommendations from former patients and/or employees with actual personal experiences, insight and knowledge on the impacts of childhood trauma within hospital settings and from remarkable doctors such as ██████████ ██████████ and ██████████ ██████████. Eradicate toxic educational and workplace culture, systems, management, employees."

## **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?**

"Employ and seek recommendations from former patients and/or employees with actual personal experiences, insight and knowledge on the impacts of childhood trauma within hospital settings and from remarkable doctors such as ██████████ ██████████ and ██████████ ██████████. Eradicate toxic educational and workplace culture, systems, management, employees."

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

"Employ and seek recommendations from former patients and/or employees with actual personal experiences, insight and knowledge on the impacts of childhood trauma within hospital settings and from remarkable doctors such as ██████████ ██████████ and ██████████ ██████████. Eradicate toxic educational and workplace culture, systems, management, employees."

## **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.**

"Toxic educational and workplace culture, systems, management, employees. Eradicate toxic educational and workplace culture, systems, management, employees. Establish independent departments for reporting breaches without fear of retribution."

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

"Toxic educational and workplace culture, systems, management, employees. Eradicate toxic educational and workplace culture, systems, management, employees. Establish independent departments for reporting breaches without fear of retribution."

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

"Urgently change the Family Law Act to financially protect a biological child born with serious physical conditions which will enable them to greatly improve their quality of life through financial security and the ability to access assessments and treatments, medicines, various supports,

housing, nutrition and education."

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

"Employ and seek recommendations from former patients and/or employees with actual personal experiences, insight and knowledge on the impacts of childhood trauma within hospital settings and from remarkable doctors such as [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. Eradicate toxic culture, systems, management, employees. Establish independent departments for reporting breaches without fear of retribution. Greater promotions and employment opportunities within the health profession for persons with actual knowledge, understanding and experience."

**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?**

"Urgently change the Family Law Act to financially protect a biological child born with serious physical conditions which will enable them to greatly improve their quality of life through financial security and the ability to access assessments and treatments, medicines, various supports, housing, nutrition and education. Employ and seek recommendations from former patients and/or employees with actual personal experiences, insight and knowledge on the impacts of childhood trauma within hospital settings and from remarkable doctors such as [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. Eradicate toxic culture, systems, management, employees. Establish independent departments for reporting breaches without fear of retribution."

**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?**

"Urgently change the Family Law Act to financially protect a biological child born with serious physical conditions which will enable them to greatly improve their quality of life through financial security and the ability to access assessments and treatments, medicines, various supports, housing, nutrition and education. Employ and seek recommendations from former patients and/or employees with actual personal experiences, insight and knowledge on the impacts of childhood trauma within hospital settings and from remarkable doctors such as [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. Eradicate toxic culture, systems, management, employees. Establish independent departments for reporting breaches without fear of retribution. Provide mandatory protocols for use of Emla or Numit creams to all hospital/medical units and settings for immediate access; needle phobia is a serious and everlasting issue often resulting from childhood trauma. Patients, particularly adolescents and adults, are most often routinely dismissed and patronised for expressing fear of needles. Currently emla cream is only stocked in paediatric wards and must be requested by an individual patient, however, if it were widely available and used across all areas it would eliminate trauma in all individuals who have any fear of needles ranging from mild anxiety to serve needle phobia. Trauma from experiences with health care workers can impact a patient from seeking future care and negatively compromise their physical or mental health."

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

"Urgently change the Family Law Act to financially protect a biological child born with serious physical conditions which will enable them to greatly improve their quality of life through financial security and the ability to access assessments and treatments, medicines, various supports,

housing, nutrition and education. Employ and seek recommendations from former patients and/or employees with actual personal experiences, insight and knowledge on the impacts of childhood trauma within hospital settings and from remarkable doctors such as [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. Eradicate toxic culture, systems, management, employees. Establish independent departments for reporting breaches without fear of retribution. Provide mandatory protocols for use of Emla or Numit creams to all hospital/medical units and settings for immediate access; needle phobia is a serious and everlasting issue often resulting from childhood trauma. Patients, particularly adolescents and adults, are most often routinely dismissed and patronised for expressing fear of needles. Currently emla cream is only stocked in paediatric wards and must be requested by an individual patient, however, if it were widely available and used across all areas it would eliminate trauma in all individuals who have any fear of needles ranging from mild anxiety to serve needle phobia. Trauma from experiences with health care workers can impact a patient from seeking future care and negatively compromise their physical or mental health."

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

"Urgently change the Family Law Act to financially protect a biological child born with serious physical conditions which will enable them to greatly improve their quality of life through financial security and the ability to access assessments and treatments, medicines, various supports, housing, nutrition and education. Employ and seek recommendations from former patients and/or employees with actual personal experiences, insight and knowledge on the impacts of childhood trauma within hospital settings and from remarkable doctors such as [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. Eradicate toxic culture, systems, management, employees. Establish independent departments for reporting breaches without fear of retribution. Provide mandatory protocols for use of Emla or Numit creams to all hospital/medical units and settings for immediate access; needle phobia is a serious and everlasting issue often resulting from childhood trauma. Patients, particularly adolescents and adults, are most often routinely dismissed and patronised for expressing fear of needles. Currently emla cream is only stocked in paediatric wards and must be requested by an individual patient, however, if it were widely available and used across all areas it would eliminate trauma in all individuals who have any fear of needles ranging from mild anxiety to serve needle phobia. Trauma from experiences with health care workers can impact a patient from seeking future care and negatively compromise their physical or mental health."