



26 July 2019 - MENTAL HEALTH ROYAL COMMISSION HEARINGS COME TO A CLOSE

More than 90 witnesses have given evidence during four weeks of public hearings, which end today, as part of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System.

During the hearings, the Commission heard from farmers, politicians, refugees, police officers, community leaders, clinicians and researchers on a variety of themes including suicide prevention, stigma, community resilience and accessing and navigating the system.

Chair of the Commission, Penny Armytage said the evidence had reaffirmed that mental health challenges can affect anyone, at any time – but that with good mental health and the proper mental health supports and services people can live contributing lives.

"We have been moved by the very personal stories and testimony we have heard during the past month, but also by the commitment people have to ensuring change not only for themselves but for their fellow Victorians," Ms Armytage said.

"During our hearings we were also welcomed into the Maryborough community where we heard the perspectives of regional and rural Victorians, and at the Aborigines Advancement League in Thornbury where we heard about the critical importance of building culturally and community appropriate services.

"We want to recognise those people who have given their time both professionally and personally to be part of this monumental reform. It is truly a testament to human kindness, resilience and commitment, that individuals have taken it upon themselves that if they help one person through this process, that's a win."

Ms Armytage said amongst all the challenges the witnesses had identified or experienced, there was a sense of hope about the future of mental health services in Victoria.

"There is a certain weight to the responsibility before us, but neither I or my fellow Commissioners shy away from that challenge – we know what is at stake and we will work hard to generate genuine change," Ms Armytage said.

Submissions to the Royal Commission opened on 18 April and closed on 5 July, with more than 2,000 people and organisations having their say. The submissions include a range of perspectives from people with lived experience, carers and families, the workforce, mental health and other organisations. Formal submissions will start to be published online after the hearings.

Thousands of people have engaged with the Royal Commission so far, providing input into the future of mental health services in Victoria. This includes through public hearings, submissions, more than 1,600 people that attended community consultations, and builds on the 8,000 contributions into the Commission's Terms of Reference.

"We have investigated some important themes during our hearings but recognise we can't consider everything in four weeks. As part of the next phase of our work we will examine issues and ideas and deliberate further – this may include targeted engagement and research, hearings, roundtables and other activity," Ms Armytage said.

The Commission will deliver its interim report in late November this year and a final report in October 2020. To stay up to date visit www.rcvmhs.vic.gov.au or follow the Commission on Twitter [@RCMentalHealth](https://twitter.com/RCMentalHealth)

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