

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

## Organisation Name

Karli Health Centre, Pty Ltd - SUB.0001.0007.0055

## Name

Ms Karli Dettman

## How can the Victorian community reduce the stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness?

"Through education, awareness and information available electronically and in Auslan (Australian Sign Language)."

## 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?

"Karli Health Centre has used a dual approach of individual counselling and psycho education in conjunction with yoga, all delivered in Auslan without the use of interpreters. It would be useful in preventing and/or addressing earlier treatment and support to Auslan users if the public health system were aware of our treatment techniques. As well, it would be exceedingly helpful if the public health system actually had niche service provision of in-patient treatment that was a fully Auslan accessible, Deaf-friendly service."

## What ideas do you have to prevent suicide?

"Education can not be stressed too much; education in Auslan about mental health and successful treatment for suicide prevention. Having mainstream conferences made accessible through the provision of Auslan-English interpreters would also be helpful. However, returning to education, this is the key to prevention. Many Auslan users, especially the young, are unaware of options available to them to support them to living a happy, healthy life. One way of doing this which has been already proven to be highly successful is to have a ""deaf-friendly"" conference, organised by Deaf leaders and Deaf professionals that provides a forum to highlight positive treatment options."

## 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.

"Language and cultural barriers play a significant role in allowing Deaf Auslan users to experience good mental health services. Further, for some, deafness is an extremely isolating experience that is further compounded when the individual tries to seek assistance. There are very few mental health professionals who have skill and understanding of the affects of lifelong deafness and what does and doesn't present challenges for the Deaf Auslan user. Unwittingly, it is often the ignorance about what lifelong deafness really means as well as the misconceptions that the mental health professional has about the cultural differences of Deaf individuals that often results in the Deaf individual disengaging with a mainstream service. The need to use interpreters in such settings can also be problematic as Auslan-English interpreters with knowledge of working in the mental health sector are extremely rare. As well, rarely is the same interpreter used as a part of the treatment team. Instead, there is a ""passing parade"" of interpreters, which can distress the Auslan user as well as complicate the interpreting process, resulting in neither the mental

health professional nor the Auslan user having the clear communication that the setting demands."

**What areas and ideas for change you would like the Royal Commission to prioritise?**

N/A

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

"I would be willing to discuss any or all of the matters raised with you further, if so desired."