

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

## Organisation Name

N/A

## Name

Miss Laura Lidgerwood

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

"Awareness. Programs at grass roots level. Educating children at a young age, or perhaps start of high school about mental health and the symptoms, signs, causes and breaking down the stigma. Public health campaigns run through government, advertising in order to break down the barriers. Most importantly proving awareness to employers so that they can best assist their employees in their time of need. Employers often do not hit the mark and have no concept of what to do or how to approach someone who is mentally unwell."

### **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?**

"Private system is great, however public system needs improvement. People need to feel nurtured and cared for and most importantly safe when they are being hospitalised. This is not always the case. Since having private health insurance and using private system I have felt safe and cared for by the best specialists. I really feel I learn more about my health and have far greater access to the services I require."

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

Awareness! People suffer in silence. Workers and specialists alike need to be suicide prevention trained and also carers need to be well informed of signs and symptoms and need access point to services. Mental health for aid courses would be a good start.

### **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.**

"Services are messy. No cohesion and linking with services. Money, money, money. Everything costs so much! Awareness from carers, employees, schools, community and at times the individual all make it harder for people with an enduring mental illness to live a fulfilling and affordable life. "

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

"I have no idea, but I really hope something is done to address this. I was a former social worker and I really believe more funding needs to be given to rural and remote communities to combat this. "

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

"Financial benefits, support e.g. counselling, support groups respite."

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

"Break the stigma. I'd love to work in peer support but I am fearful of my employers knowing about my role so openly, including future employers."

**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 NDIS may help but people need support in the form of carers or support workers and they need be not judged for asking for help. People also need finances.

**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?**

"Safety in public health system, qualified workers, detailed intake processes, client matching."

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

Funding! Funding and more funding. Renovate old infrastructure. Make it a nice place to be.

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

"I have had people assault me, workers steal from me, people give me drugs without my knowing (So unwell) and abuse me in hospital....this behaviour is not acceptable. You need the right workers who care, genuinely"