

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

SUB. 0002.0029.0383

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

N/A

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 childhood education ACT therapy

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

N/A

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.

Encourage universities to promote mental health nursing. Provide a work place that is conducive to wellness and a place that mental health workers would like to work.

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

"If a person is at risk to his/herself and others it should override his/her right to privacy and rights Making the Implementation of Community Treatment Orders easier, Extending the time mental health patients can be held would prevent some crime, There would be less pressure on Police, Courts, Medical personnel, Service Providers, saving time and money. It is imperative that the Federal and State Government work together in bipartisanship to solve the crisis that is mental health and homelessness. It would seem that no government wishes to take on the immense challenge. "

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

N/A

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

Provide fulltime support for workers quiet and comfortable places for workers to have a break or talk to support worker. state of the art mental health services alongside patient accommodation. A vision that is conducive to wellness and a place that mental health workers would like to work

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?

More qualified mental Health workers

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?

"More Mental Health workers Making the Implementation of Community Treatment Orders easier, Extending the time mental health patients can be held longer short and long term mental health accommodation with 24 hour qualified mental Health workers "

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

Encourage people to study mental health

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

"Martin Foley MP, Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing and Mental Health, referred my correspondence to the Office of the Chief Psychiatrist. I spoke with the Chief Psychiatrist and while generous with her time and informative, there was no vision for future improvement of the Implementation of Community Treatment Orders "

DRAFT

The Hon Greg Hunt Federal MP

Minister for Health

2nd March 2018

Dear Minister

My name is [REDACTED]. I am a concerned citizen.

For approximately 6 months I have been assisting a homeless woman with a mental illness, who sleeps outside the store where I work part time in [REDACTED]

During this time, she has been in jail, in a mental health facility, emergency centres, into short term accommodation, then back on the street each time.

To me when she is lucid she is mostly polite, sometimes chatty. To others she is mostly tolerant.

When she is delusional/psychotic she is mostly just tolerant of me.

When delusional/psychotic some of the behaviours include:

- Shouting, yelling, screaming and swearing at passers-by, or to no one in particular, to Police, to service providers.
- Not interested in cooperating with service providers.
- Will not always avail herself of the service available to the homeless.
- Has conversations with people who aren't there.
- Gets extremely anxious and paranoid.
- Imagines things are on her. "Is someone on my head"
- Has **ticks?**, using a hand gesture to brush something away, continually rubbing her hands.
- Doesn't shower or change her clothes for long periods, even when she has soiled herself.
- Defecates and urinates in the street.
- Has a compulsion to continuously spit.
- Continually throws out brand new clothing, bedding, toiletries, portable radio and mobile phones, that people have purchased for her or she has purchased herself.
- Imagines many things for example "being done for murder in America when she was two years old and spending 14 years over there in jail"
- After she had been one court appearance she said "I have special dispensation from the court to be held at the men's prison" "because I hate the bitches prison"
- Is suspicious and has a dislike of most people. Would prefer to be alone.

Saturday she was assaulted by a man (who may have been unwell himself or under the influence of something) who was initially yelling at me, she yelled at him to get away, he then turned on her and yelling at her, and ended up punching her in the head. After that incident she started yelling and screaming, the Police came. On my break, I saw the police talking to her, I went over and the Police explained it was part of her bail condition that she not be in Bourke St. She began to become agitated, and got a wild look in her eyes, the police officer asked her to calm down, I immediately asked her to look at me and she calmed. The Police moved away. I offered to try to

move her on peacefully. I spoke to her and she moved on without incident. The police were appreciative as there would most likely be a scene if they had asked her to move on.

This week

Tuesday: I arrived for work to after days off and she was still in the faeces stained clothes she was in on Saturday. I took her to shower, (at a local charity organisation). I had clothes that I had purchased for her. We arrived and she didn't want to stay, I convinced her to stay. She wanted to keep her faeces stained quilt, but I said I would buy her a new one.

Wednesday: I came into the city on my day off, to meet with her. She had thrown out the quilt that I had purchased for her the day before. I went shopping for clothes with her. We went on a half hour tram journey to a reasonably priced store. The tram was full and she got very annoyed with an elderly gentleman with a walking stick, or anyone who brushed passed her. We got to the store and she selected several sets of clothing shampoo and deodorant (I would sometimes keep sets of clothes in my locker). After a time, I could see she was becoming agitated, so I suggested we go to the checkout. At the self-service section she had an outburst, yelling and swearing. We went outside and she was still yelling and swearing. She was being very short with me. I felt I needed to escort her back to the city, as I didn't want her to be yelling on the tram, and I felt very worried for the people on the tram and what she may do. She was very sullen on the way back and didn't say a word. On approaching the city, I asked if she would like me to go with her to have a shower, like we had planned, she said no. We got off the tram and I asked if she would like me to take some clothes and put them in my locker. She was still very annoyed and said no.

Then on I got on the tram to go home and two psychotic men were on the tram carrying on very loudly, scaring people, the tram was full but no one was sitting in the surrounding eight seats available, they were all squashed up the other end of the tram. Unknowingly I sat near them. Their behaviour was appalling. I got off at the next stop alerting the driver. Unfortunately, this a common occurrence on the 86-tram route.

Thursday: I arrived for work and everything she purchased was gone, she said she threw it out when she was arrested the day before. She was in the same clothes I had given her on Monday.

This has been very distressing for me to witness over the months.

Community services are doing what they can, but something in the system isn't working, for her to be left on the streets so unwell.

Police, Medical staff and service providers are in the most unenviable position, continually having to attend her when she is unwell.

She obviously needs long term hospital psychiatric care, not jail.

I understand her crimes must be acted on.

It is possible that the crimes she has committed could have been prevented had she had the long term help she needs earlier.

If she was in long term hospital, there would be less pressure on Police, Courts, Medical personnel, Service Providers, saving time and money.

Psychiatrists may not see all the behaviours above in a consultation. She is smart and can be cunning. I can imagine she could easily deceive some mental health professionals.

If she doesn't want to answer a question, she will say she has forgotten or shrug.

She told me she has drug induced schizophrenia and that she can be very violent.

She told me about a Tribunal coming up and of a Community Treatment Order, of which I had no understanding of at the time but now know what it is.

How has this not happened earlier, what needs to change.

What can you do to help Minister?

Is there legislation that needs to be changed?

Are there any long term psychiatric facilities where she could go?

I have not named her as I don't have her permission to write to you. I am not related to her.

I have not mentioned my place of work as I'm not aware if there is a policy against using it.

I'm not looking for praise and would rather remain anonymous.

I would hope for some positive change for this women and people like her.

Thank you for your time.

Faithfully

██████████

Should I use a pseudo instead of she and her?

Is it acceptable to cc people in an email to the minister?

Cc

The Hon Jill Hennessy MP

Victorian Minister for Health

minister.health@health.vic.gov.au

Simon Judkins (President) Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM)

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The Age

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