

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

SUB. 0002.0017.0008



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

"Conversation about mental health and suicide need to happen obviously, but for me it starts with government and media. I understand that it has been decided not to talk about suicides when they happen as it has been proven that when idealized more suicides happen. This practice has been going on for decades now, yet 620 odd people commit suicide each year in Victoria. I don't think it's working very well. How do we expect the public or communities to talk openly about suicide if it is so obviously not spoken about in the media or by government. We must find a way to openly talk about suicide in the media and government, like we do for the road toll, heart disease or cancer. If this doesn't happen then how could we ever expect it to happen in our communities by the people that most need to talk about it. Point 2 We are currently running community events throughout Gippsland on mental health, drug and alcohol addiction and suicide, with the support of Bendigo Bank. These are being facilitated by Mindful Aus. More of these types of events will certainly help break down the stigma as they start meaningful and caring conversations, they help the communities understand how and why these conditions exist and how they are generally connected. Mindful Aus also have a program called "inside out". This is a program pitched at primary school that includes children, teachers and parents. This holistic approach I believe would certainly reduce stigma and discrimination. Education is the only way and educating every primary school student along with many of the parents and teachers would have to have the greatest opportunity at achieving this. Using this program or similar would certainly be my answer to this question"

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?

"I don't have a lot to say that I see is working well. There are definitely organisations that are doing good work around that place. As far as government organisations it is almost as bad as it can get and this commission could not come quick enough. To prevent mental illness we need education in schools, resilience is the key. We cannot eliminate mental illness but we would have to be fools to think we cannot reduce it significantly. To support early treatment we need access, this may not be too bad in the city but regional Vic has no services available in a timely manner. And if it is available then there is generally not an easy nor cost effective way to get to it. Mental health is under resourced and under skilled. General practitioners are not experts in mental health. Why are they the first port of call?"

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

"Nothing is working well, nothing is being done that I can see. To prevent suicide the first thing that should be done is place a ban on the anti-depressants that contain SSRI's. My son went to the GP on November 7th last year asking for help. They prescribed him Sertraline. He committed suicide 4 weeks later, he was 21 years old. I believe had he not been on this drug he would still be alive"

today. I believe there is a study that backs this statement, but i cannot find it. The herald sun published some information on this study around the start of June, but that all i have so possibly useless info. What is not arguable though is that this drug is not for people under 18, and not recommended for people under 24. one of the side effects is suicidal thoughts. Why would a GP give this to a 21 year old in a 15minute consultation and send them out the door? this is a ridiculous practice and should be stopped immediately We should also be able to strongly suggest to anyone who does come in with signs of mental health, that they bring a support person or persons they trust. I honestly believe had this been suggested to my son [REDACTED] he would have had someone, hopefully myself but at least someone who new he was struggling and know to look out for him within the danger period of the drug he was given. Of course option 1 is don't give people this age these type of drugs in the first place. Or the GP send people whom need help with mental illness to an expert. maybe drugs isn't the answer in every case. GP'S ARE NOT EXPERTS IN THIS FIELD!"

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.

"Lack of public transport in regional Vic, lack of mental Health facilities, lack of quality trained people"

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

"i can only really speak for [REDACTED] and surrounds. but you cannot get into the local psychologist, they have stopped taking patients. There is no Head-space even though one of our health professional has a sign for headspace out the front of their building. when you go in and ask for head-space, the reception have no idea what you are asking for. what do we expect people in this area to do. travel. How? Wait? some issues simply cannot wait. One of my friends, only last week came to see me as she new i had been fairly heavily involved in suicide prevention since [REDACTED] death. Her daughter was on suicide watch. She couldn't get her into anyone within 50km's of her house within the next 6 months. i was able to give some organisations in Melbourne. these were expensive and some travel time away. Luckily this family could afford both the money and time but what for those who cannot. What are they to do, go home and hope for the best?"

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

"they need to be involved in the care plan, "

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

i do not know

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?

i do not know

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?

"GP's involvement with mentally ill patients and the ability to prescribe drugs, in particular Anti-depressants How people are released from care, this should include release from hospital, police and other centers Who are they released to, (support network). What needs might they need on release. what state of mind are they in on release"

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

"Start educating the current health professionals and police into some of the obvious outcomes. would have been nice to see some money put aside in the last state budget, given the Andrews government has committed to implementing all of the commissions recommendations. this is going to cost billions we need to start putting this money aside asap, money will be the biggest hurdle to fixing the system. "

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

"Education is the number one key. we need open and honest conversations continually, we need caring, empathy and understanding in our communities. this has to start with our leaders, all leaders big and small, from the premier to the presidents of the local football clubs, principals and bosses. if the leaders do this as a way of life other will naturally follow."