

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

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

"Mental illness community courses, subject at school, open forums"

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?

Mental illness support until for under 18 yet no working system allowing counselling and psychiatric treatment available for adults and what is available has lengthy waits.

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

Lifeline available but having personally rung was told to ring back later due to high volume. Train and employ more staff to open more lines for immediate access. Introduce continual ongoing psychiatric care for people of all ages

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.

"From personal experience, families aren't being listened to or heard. Insufficient no of trained staff. My brother was court ordered to a psychiatric unit yet no counsellors, psychiatrists or psychologists were offered. The facility was more like a B and B. Also many services only available to inpatients. Make all services available to both in and outpatients. "

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

"In larger, poorer communities there are so many cases of mental health issues that NO ONE receives appropriate help. In the facility my brother was in, there was no continual care by the same person. Different faces, with trainees etc. Open more facilities as per the demographic re suicides, mental health issues and population."

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

No one listens to family. I issued a complaint to the ombudsman re my brother's care and in 2 years I have received 3 phone calls and in the end gave up. Absolutely appalling!! Families need to be involved in the care of loved ones. They need to be invited to meetings and counselling and offered both financial and emotional help.

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

Open up more jobs. Introduce training to more mature people who can relate to mental health

issues rather than to the younger workforce with no life experience. Introduce regular assessments and counselling for staff also.

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 feel there are no opportunities. Most are so crippled with their mental issues to work so introduce social workers and mentors. Introduce home follow ups. As a govt offer incentives for employers to offer work to people living with mental illness.

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?

"Open up more Psychiatric facilities Introduce Counselling, psychiatry and psychology in these facilities Introduce ongoing Psychiatric/counselling care to both the patient and family Involve families in interactions with the patients Introduce mentors/supervision and home care Ensure complaints are followed up immediately"

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

Introduce unlimited access to Counselling/Psychiatry to patients

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

"My experience with ████████ Mental Health facility was horrendous. My brother was court ordered there after a psychotic incident. Before admission he was left 3 days in the emergency ward f ████████ hospital with no phone, tv or contact with family etc as no beds were available. For someone with mental health issues he was affected by this. It was like he was caged at the zoo. Once admitted he was allowed to wander off the premises with no supervision, allowed to smoke with other patients in a public carpark adjacent to a maternity facility. He was also allowed numerous visitors even though his family rang several times a day to advise that many of these visitors were his drug dealers. He was court ordered yet due to no supervision left the premises by taxi SEVERAL times to which staff were not even aware and only made aware when family members rang to advise. The only medication most were offered were sleeping tablets. How this was supposed to help heal a psychotic episode I don't know. When I issued a complaint, it has taken over 2 years for anyone to respond until I gave up."