

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

Organisation Name

HALT (Hope Assistance Local Tradies)

Name

Mr Jeremy Forbes

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

"HALT (Hope Assistance Local Tradies <http://thehaltbrekky.com>) works with thousands of community members across Australia every year. We primarily speak with Tradies, but also apprentices, farmers, miners, businesses people, sporting clubs, basically a whole of community approach, and there are some ways to improve this. Firstly and foremost, there needs to be more education and awareness raising grassroots programs in the community, people in the community, especially men, of all ages, struggle to even understand what mental illness, anxiety, depression, is, risk factors and how to protect themselves. Both local, state and national service agencies often work in silos. HALT invites service agencies to our events to speak about what they offer to community but the offer is very rarely reciprocated. There needs to be more of a push into small to medium businesses. Sporting clubs, community groups and businesses need suicide prevention workers in the community, by the way, HALT workers are finally being rolled out into communities. There are a lot of high profile people out there making lots of money telling their stories about mental health, we need more than that, we need solutions and ways forward. We see a lot of large service agencies very well funded, especially the PHN's, but the money isn't getting to the community to be fully utilised. Please, HALT is a registered charity, that has held hundreds of events across Victoria yet have not had a meeting with the state mental health minister and have not received a cent from the state government? Why is this? We could have HALT workers in every region of Victoria holding suicide prevention events and running educational awareness programs, partnering with service agencies and communities, rates are increasing, we desperately need to encourage, support and fund grassroots suicide prevention groups! It has to start in community... "

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?

"Conversations are starting to happen, service agencies are beginning to respond and go out into community before. Communities are starting to be more responsible and seek out educational possibilities. Lifeline works Community Health Centres are slowly engaging with community out of the normal business hours. "

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

"Grassroots Community organisations, actually working in the community, with community members and supporting community. Also, education, especially TAFE. HALT works with TAFE's across Victoria. When I talk with Tradies across Australia, the biggest issues that they identify is relationships, money, alcohol, drugs and gambling, guess what, these are the issues apprentices aren't taught about at TAFE yet these risk factors are killing our apprentices and tradies every day. We need to introduce in to the curriculum sections covering these risk factors. "

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.

N/A

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

N/A

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?

N/A

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?

N/A

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?

"I would like the Royal Commission to look at prevention and early intervention at a community level. I founded HALT in 2013 and have existed in the suicide prevention space every day since, working with communities, helping communities and saving lives. It starts at the community level, along with the integration of the mental health workers in the community, community health, doctors having more training in mental illness and the service agencies being more proactive in community engagement, this is not a 9am - 5pm issue."

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

N/A

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

"I am a Tradie, I've lived in the tradies/blokey/macho culture, HALT, the charity I founded, has spread across 5 states of Australia, recently been funded by the federal government to put HALT workers in two communities in Victoria. I have a TED talk: https://www.ted.com/talks/jeremy_forbes_how_to_start_a_conversation_about_suicide?language=en I live this every day and have never been more satisfied by my work. I'll see high profile people in front of the commission, politicians, CEO's etc, I would like the opportunity to speak, be heard, speak on behalf of the communities I work with every day. I want to ask why I have no state funding after doing so much in Victoria, why is the rate going up, despite the service agencies being well funded, why they don't come out to engage in community. I hear about suicide's every week, I'm passionate, HALT works, there are other organisations like HALT out there in community, please, give them a voice to be heard..we are still losing people, we could be down

more. Thank you for the opportunity to put my submission forward. "