

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

Organisation Name

Rainbow Families Victoria - SUB.0001.0032.0086

Name

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How can the Victorian community reduce the stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness?

" The stigma and discrimination faced by many members of the LGBTIQ+ and non binary communities, including our children and family members, is debilitating, pervasive and present within many aspects of peoples' day to day lives - at work, at home, at school and in the communities we live in. "

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?

" Rainbow Families Victoria believes that in order to prevent mental illness there needs to be more community education on the impact of stigma and discrimination on members of the LGBTIQ+ communities including the impact of direct and indirect discrimination on our children and our families. Rainbow Families Victoria knows that for many rainbow families access to an LGBTIQ+ inclusive mental health service is incredibly important but rare to find. Such services, like queerspace or Thorne Harbour Health, are both culturally safe and competent, understand our diverse family forms and are inclusive of our trans, gender diverse and non-binary communities too. Funding for more services that are LGBTIQ+ specific, with targeted services for our children and families, will help people seek treatment and support earlier. Many of our community members are hyper-vigilant and fearful of mainstream or universal mental health services. We desperately need more targeted LGBTIQ+ and rainbow families services across Victoria - beyond having a Rainbow Tick, mental health services must do more to ensure they understand our diverse families and the people within them. Rainbow Families Victoria would also like to see more content within respectful relationships education and sexuality education or related health curricula - from early years education to secondary school - that is inclusive of diverse family forms including rainbow families, diverse sexualities and genders, addresses rigid gender stereotypes, the ways families are formed including IVF and ART as well as information about variations in sex characteristics and the intersex community, among other areas. In response to this question, our rainbow family community members say: "" (we need) more services like Drummond St, Bouverie Centre, Queerspace, Switchboard."" ""Preventing mental illness involved creating a fair, respectful, caring, inclusive, supportive and equal community, where people can experience hope, satisfaction, connection and a good future. This involves the government needing to do a much better job to protect the environment and climate - it is hard for people to feel peaceful and happy knowing that the government are not addressing the fundamentals that are needed for a healthy environment, society, families and individuals"". ""Support playgroups for children (in rainbow families), better education in schools about family diversity. Teacher education"" ""There needs to more education in schools for acceptance of rainbow LGBTQI families and help for non LGBTQI members eg counselling etc."" ""Nothing is working well. (A) 12 month wait for the one bottlenecked public gender clinic meanwhile 52% of trans women have considered suicide in the last 2 weeks"" ""Rename Maternal Child Health - it doesn't include gay or bisexual dads or non-

binary parents so we don't go and get the support we need as new parents. Maybe rename to child and family health - make it more inclusive"" Some rainbow families not only include one or more LGBTIQ+ parents or carers but we have children who are also LGBTIQ+ or non-binary: "" (Our) local doctor was fabulous..but there was only one specialist available to deal with hormone treatment . Therefore the wait was 6 months before my son was even able to see him . This caused increased anxiety and depression for my son. We need more trained specialists and at least some emotional support phone line available."" "

What ideas do you have to prevent suicide?

" Rainbow Families Victoria would like to see LGBTIQ+ suicide prevention training including support services and training that is targeted and specific to the LGBTIQ+ and non-binary communities and that is inclusive of our rainbow families and our children. We also would like to see: More funding for Switchboard More funding or LGBTIQ+ specific mental health services More funding for mainstream services to be trained to provide culturally competent LGBTIQ+ services including especially for our rainbow families. Better education and awareness about rainbow families within all aspects of family creation and support including Maternal Child Health, early years education, childbirth education etc. "

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.

" Rainbow Families Victoria is painfully aware that our community members often find it very difficult to access a mental health treatment in a timely manner, that is safe, respectful and welcoming of our diverse families including the diverse genders, sexualities and variations in sex characteristics of all members of our families. There are very practical steps that can ensure members of rainbow families can find, access and experiences appropriate mental health services when and if they need to - some examples include: Promotion and marketing where our rainbow families are visible and represented including inclusion or welcoming statements on websites, for example. Inclusive environments: waiting rooms,gender neutral toilets including change rooms, Mental Health support groups run by appropriate practitioners with LGBTIQ+ experience or appropriate lived experience. More public gender clinics open to trans, gender diverse and non-binary clients including children and young people. Fast tracked assessment times and more specific support when on a waitlist for a service - especially when risk has been assessed as high or where recognition of the distress caused by gender dysphoria is understood as serious, for example. Privacy policies: If questions are asked of clients about sex, sexuality and gender, explain to the client why you need to ask the question and what you are doing with the information. and; Training and professional development for mental health practitioners, among other measures. Overall Rainbow Families Victoria would like to see more funding for wrap-around, family-centered mental health services for all members of the LGBTIQ+ communities including for rainbow families and our children, including pre-conception, during separation, when families are forming through adoption or blended families, and where children from rainbow families need culturally-competent support that recognises and appreciates the diverse family form they are part of. "

What areas and ideas for change you would like the Royal Commission to prioritise?

N/A

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

Thank you for considering our submission.