

WHAT CAN BE DONE

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Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System,
PO Box 12079
A'Beckett Street
Melbourne Vic 8006

4 July, 2017

Dear Commissioners,

Re: Submission from the What Can Be Done Steering Committee to the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System

Please find attached the What Can Be Done Steering Committee's submission to the Royal Commission.

Also attached is the Churchill Fellowship Report, prepared by Magistrate Jennifer Bowles, entitled What Can Be Done – Residential therapeutic treatment options for young people suffering substance abuse/mental illness.

The What Can Be Done Steering Committee comprises 27 professionals who have varied involvement in the fields of youth justice, mental health and drug and alcohol support services. This includes the CEOs of YSAS, Windana, Odyssey House and Taskforce, senior medical/addiction specialists from St Vincent's Hospital, alcohol and other drug clinical specialists, clinical and forensic psychiatrists, the community service agency sector, education/training, lawyers, an aboriginal person with lived experience and advocacy groups.



In summary:

- The overwhelming rates of drug and alcohol misuse and mental health issues among young people in Victoria's Youth Justice system require urgent attention;
- A 'one size fits all' approach to Youth Justice will not be the best solution to rehabilitation, reduced rates of recidivism and the public feeling safe;
- Young people with mental health and drug and alcohol misuse issues often have more complex underlying issues, including trauma, abuse and neglect;
- Legislative change (proposed Youth Therapeutic Orders) to provide for secure, intensive treatment (over a reasonable period of time) is essential for many in terms of ensuring they can effectively deal with their underlying issues and in order to feel more positive about the future; and
- Significant investment in the short-term is less costly to the community than the long-term costs of incarceration, health, security concerns and social impacts.

We formally request the opportunity to directly present to the Royal Commission and participate in targeted engagement.

We trust this submission will assist the Royal Commission in identifying additional solutions to positively improve the lives of our young people.

Yours sincerely,



Frank Dixon
Chair, What Can Be Done Steering Committee
info@whatcanbedone.com.au



Anne-Maree Kaser, CEO, Windana




Sam Biondo, Executive Officer, VAADA



Dr Andrew Bruun, CEO, YSAS



Dr Stefan Gruenert, CEO, Odyssey House



Ray Blessing, CEO, TaskForce



John F Anderson, Director



Trevor Pearce, Acting CEO, VACCHO