

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

Organisation Name

N/A

Name

Ms Kate Mawson

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

"Promoting mental illness is one way to engage the community in the hope of reducing the stigma. Mostly I hear talk of depression but I think it's important to cover more heavy topics such as schizophrenia. We could cover stories, both positive and negative, in the media, within social media content, tv shows, etc. The councils could incorporate local patients from their municipalities into shows at their community centre, etc. I have loads of ideas."

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 know that much is working well when it comes to schizophrenia. I hope that if we start talking about schizophrenia specifically that would be a good start. Every mental health story I hear of refers to depression.

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

"Prevention of suicide is about making people feel like they belong. Although, when you are paranoid and delusional, it's impossible to think logically. Having people who care about you, around you, is imperative to ensuring safety. Ensuring medication works and there's a holistic approach to maintaining good health. Alcohol and nicotine are massive issues regarding mental health patients as well as diet. They all seem to feed one another and it's a vicious cycle."

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.

"As per above, the vicious cycle can be dangerous to one's stability. Ensuring medication works and is updated to ensure the approach is still relevant to the patient instead of just going through the motions with them pretending all's okay as it's easier than actually doing something constructive. Schizophrenia is definitely out into the too hard basket, as you have to be able to read between the lines dealing with such patients. Very hard when the privacy laws get in the way of helping people with schizophrenia."

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

"Possibly to do with boredom/lack of community/drugs in some communities. I include alcohol in drugs. Alcohol leads to so much trouble and angst. Self medication. I don't expect government to fix everything. Starts with a caring, understanding community."

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

"Carers just need people to understand the reality of what they go through. When schizophrenia and depression are under the same umbrella there's a massive issue to start with, as they are two completely separate issues that require different approaches. Families/carers need to be strong and keep it together. There is no solution to this as every case is so different. They must just keep their head up, honestly, as don't give up. "

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

"I come from a hiring background and I think the right, genuine people need to be recruited for a start. Then, providing holistic services for patients that can backup the right medication plan. In turn, the right holistic services for workers to refresh and recalibrate with a clean perspective."

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 don't see any opportunities. My sister tries her heart out looking for work to belong and contribute but it's impossible for her. Happy to discuss in more detail.

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'd like to see doctors refreshed and passionate about their work rather than complacent. I'd like to see holistic services backing up medication plans. I'd like to see alternative methods such as used overseas available here. I'd like to see medication reviewed more regularly. I'd like to see rather than my sister manipulating her doctors into thinking she's okay that they actually read between the lines and be more genuine in their approach.

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

"Communication, promotion, and transparency. People tend to do the right thing by being aware and present. Not hiding in their day to day job waiting for 5 o'clock to hit. Maybe the next generation of doctors and professionals will be more empathetic and not in such a rut with a clearer, holistic approach. Those working in the industry should be rewarded for community care rather than it be a role where there's no incentive to succeed."

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

N/A