

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

## Organisation Name

N/A

## Name

Mr Joseph Marmara

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

"First of all the Private hospitals are a shamble, some of the nurses. Shouldn't be allowed to work with animals, let alone patients with Mental illnesses."

### **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?**

"There needs to be a gay mens health support groups in Victoria. The government also needs to allow people on Work Cover or Health Insurance to be covered for the Health and Wellness Retreats. You'll get better treatment there, than any of our Private Hospitals. After all because of Mental Illness we pay higher costs for hospitals."

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

"Nothing absolutely nothing, we all know that suicide rate is the highest fatality in Australia. Higher than car accidents, higher than cancer deaths, there are at least 220+ suicides a day. All this is being swept under the carpet by the Government WHY???"

### **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.**

Like I said above more support groups need to be formed. Most of the support groups are for the youth or anyone under 30. I didn't know Mental illness has a age group assigned to it.

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

"The main culprits are the Private Hospital nurses, you go in their to get better and you come out feeling more suicidal or self harm. Because these nurse can set you up, lie and no one listens to what you have to say. You're the one with the Mental illness, so you don't even get a say. You are thrown out of the hospital, like a dog thrown out on the street."

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

"Better education about different types of Mental illnesses, and how to deal and handle situations."

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

"Well I was bullied and harrassed at work, they knew about it. However they failed to intervene till it got to the stage. Where I just couldn't take anymore. So better education on bullying and

harrassment pamphlets, meetings and education."

**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?**

"To not be discriminated against, we have the R U OK DAY. Which I find very hypocritical, because Mental illness is not about one day. I have lost all my friends through this illness, and my partner. I don't have anyone except my family, which I nearly lost too. When I try to make friends and explain to them, I have Mental illness, whooo a big barrier wall goes up. Never hear from that person again."

**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?**

"Better education, more support groups, acceptance of Wellness and Health Retreats ( with qualified Doctors, Psychologists etc...)And most of all a BIG investigation into the way the Private Hospitals are run."

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

As Above

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

"I have written an email to [REDACTED] about my Treatment at the [REDACTED]. Twice he has failed to respond to me, so I emailed Julia Collins MP. Straight away she has forwarded my email onto the DHHS.Thanks to Julia it is being taken serious and as I have said, I was ruthlessly set up by a nurse from the [REDACTED]. Whom I reported at the [REDACTED]. Well until she got me kicked out, she was not satisfied. "

## Re: Joe Marmara

My story started back at the [REDACTED], when my partner bought me flowers because I was really down, he asked Nurse [REDACTED] where he could get a vase from. Rudely and abruptly she said to him, who are they for? He said [REDACTED]. She said to him in a snappy voice, is he from the North or South, apparently it was an issue where the vase came from if it was not from the area you were in.

[REDACTED] appeared to have some vendetta against me for the time I was an inpatient, I felt bullied and therefore took the matter further at the time.

So over the last two months I was in an extremely bad head space where I became verbally abusive towards my family, something I was and am so remorseful for but I had no idea I was saying most of the stuff I was saying. My psychologist suggested that hospital was the only place for me right now as my diagnosis was quite extreme. So he had gotten me into [REDACTED]

So Joe thought going to the [REDACTED], would be a new environment, a fresh start. So I agreed with my psychologist, outreach worker and GP to admit myself. So the day I got there, I see [REDACTED] from the get go she was totally ignoring me. The pinnacle day for me was [REDACTED]. I was seeing my sisters for the first time in 1.5 months. One of them I have no recollection of abusing her, only to find out she was diagnosed with cancer.

So I had a one on one with Nurse T [REDACTED], told her I was going to have a meltdown seeing and facing my sister. Nurse T [REDACTED] said Joe, "how can we help, to make it easier for you", I said, "it would be great, if you could have a chat with them and tell them, I'm not very well. I disassociated and tried to hang myself, the other night. Hence why Joe's not allowed any cords in his rooms and he's been moved right under the nurses desks, so we can keep a close eye on him. "Absolutely", T [REDACTED] said, "we can do that". So when I got a text message they were on their way. I went to the nurse's desk and [REDACTED] was the only one in there. She barely opened the window. I said, "Is T [REDACTED] around", in a rude voice she replied, "T [REDACTED] has gone". I said to her, "my sisters are on their way". She cut me off and said, "I haven't allocated anyone yet", I said to her, "but T [REDACTED] said that she's going to organize". Again she cut me off, and said, "I haven't allocated anyone yet". My sisters arrived they told me she was rude and very cold towards them.

Normally when they do the nurse rosters, because I was in room 2. I would be in the first section, but because [REDACTED] was looking after the first section she put me in the 3rd section. So I had a nurse D [REDACTED], and I had a quiet word to nurse D [REDACTED] about how she is making life hell for me, and it all stems back to the [REDACTED].

So we were watching Married At First Sight, nurse [REDACTED] came in and was asking questions. I was answering her questions however, she was just totally ignoring me. So I asked patients [REDACTED] and another patient but I don't know her name and [REDACTED], was I imagining things. They said she was totally ignoring everything you said.

So calmly I went to the nurses station and tapped on the window, pointed at [REDACTED] and said I want to talk to you. Meanwhile there was another nurse with her, [REDACTED] told her to go so she had no witnesses, that's how cunning and shifty this nurse is. So I asked her, "why are you ignoring me", Straight away she said I'm feeling very threatened. I said to her, "how am I threatening you". She got up locked the nurses door, and the door where they were giving out meds. I said to her, "you yelled across the room when I came to get my phone charged, what are we phone chargers now". "I told you that if you read your notes, you'll see that I'm not allowed cords in my room". You replied, "ok I'm really feeling very threatened", I said how am I threatening you", I said to her, "I get it you do remember me from the [REDACTED], I reported you and this is payback". Then [REDACTED] said, "go to your room, take your meds we have a no tolerance of abuse and I'm really feeling very threatened, I'm going to call your doctor and have you out of here". I said, "yeah that's what you've wanted from day one".

Then [REDACTED] one of the patients came and got me, and said,"come on love you've done nothing wrong". Meanwhile patients went up to [REDACTED] and said to her, " are you ok", with a big smile on her face. She replies, "I'm fine".

I was in the courtyard with [REDACTED].

My sister calls me and tells me got a call from [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] call consisted of

"Hi [REDACTED] its [REDACTED] from [REDACTED] here, I mean [REDACTED], there has been an incident with Joe tonight your brother has been verbally abusive towards me, saying he remembers me from the [REDACTED], [REDACTED] said to her, "what triggered this for Joe to have said something to you" she said I don't know he just keeps going on about the [REDACTED], saying do you remember me". Then [REDACTED] went on to say, we have a zero tolerance of verbal abuse toward staff, so therefore Joe has to go tonight, [REDACTED] said she will contact Joe and ask him what has happened, [REDACTED] continued to say, "oh do you think that is a good idea it may make him escalate his behaviour and if it does I will have to contact the police", [REDACTED] said, "no you won't call the police, she said I will come and get him if I have to but you will not call the police, she said we I will if his behaviour elevates. I said no you wont, do I need to come and get him, she continued to go in circles saying well that is up to you, [REDACTED] said to [REDACTED] quite sternly, "hang on a minute you have called me and told me my brother has been verbally abusive towards you, DO YOU NEED ME TO PICK HIM UP OR NOT! In the end she said, "well he won't be staying cause we have a zero tolerance"

[REDACTED] contacted Joe, he was oblivious to what was going on, the call started with, Hi Joe, are you ok, whats going on, he said nothing why did [REDACTED] call you, [REDACTED] said, yeh they are kicking you out tonight cause of an incident with [REDACTED], Joe did not even flinch, I, [REDACTED] said don't get all upset but I am coming to get you, Joe seemed very confused by the whole thing but was quite obedient about it all, seemed to be in disbelief. Joe did explain about the phone charger, at no point in time did [REDACTED] mention to me the comments she past regarding the phone charger.

[REDACTED] one of the patients called [REDACTED] back to stipulate not to rush out until contacted by the Psychiatrist or DON as [REDACTED] has no jurisdiction over discharging Joe. [REDACTED] said when the scene took place she said to [REDACTED] are you ok and [REDACTED] said, yes I am fine. Within about 5 minutes, [REDACTED] said yeh [REDACTED] is here the DON start making your way in.

### Summary of the Matter

After the call from [REDACTED] I was adamant that the whole incident was a complete set up to have Joe kicked out of the Clinic, when she called me at 10pm her call started on a very bad note stating she was from the [REDACTED] and then corrected herself. I immediately contacted my sister [REDACTED] and explained the entire call and we both agree that nothing added up.

Earlier in the afternoon on the Sunday, my sister [REDACTED] and I visited Joe, when we got to the [REDACTED] we had to buzz in and stated we were there to see Joe Marmara, when we arrived to the nurses station to ask where we would find Joe Marmara, [REDACTED] was extremely cold towards us, even turned to the nurse next to her, "these are Joe Marmara's" sisters, unbeknown why she made the statement, but barely lifted her head to look up at us or even acknowledge us. I now realise the statement was made because Joe had asked for [REDACTED] another nurse to ask to speak with us sisters, which never took place.

When we arrived at the [REDACTED] Joe was sitting with the patients out in the courtyard, quite happy until of course he had to face myself, where Joe went in to quite a meltdown and he had not long found out that I had been battling cancer and hence the reason Joe was hospitalised due to his actions at the time and had no re collection of anything he said and has been extremely remorseful about everything.

So after the call from [REDACTED] [REDACTED] the DON had called me telling me Joe will need to leave and how soon I could pick him up, I explained that I was on my way and would be there within half hour. I went on and stated that I was not impressed with all this and it was a complete set up by [REDACTED] and that they would not be hearing the end of this. I also explained that we were there today and [REDACTED] coldness towards my sister and I. [REDACTED] was not interested at all in what I had to say. When arriving to the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] came and greeted me in the corridor, I said, "shouldn't we have a meeting with [REDACTED] about what has gone on here, [REDACTED] said, No not now you can come back tomorrow if you like, I said, "no I will deal with it another way and take matters further".

[REDACTED] went looking for Joe, went in to the wrong room then went into Joe's room after one of the other nurses said no his in this room, [REDACTED] abusively said, HE WAS TOLD TO STAY IN HIS ROOM, (speaking to Joe that was never said).

So we went out to the courtyard, [REDACTED] yelled out, "Joe", he answered, "Yes" she said, "could you come with me please", Joe came immediately and was taken back to his room, [REDACTED] started to explain that the incident that occurred and that her staff felt threatened, I corrected her and stated, not staff, one staff member. [REDACTED] said, so Joe we will need you to go tonight.

Joe said to [REDACTED] there's two sides to the story. She flatly said No, legally I need to protect my staff. Joe said to [REDACTED] "your pathetic", and then had raised an incident that he witnessed of her maltreatment of another patient, "fancy a patient saying to you, I'm going now. You respond with Good", what kind of Director of Nursing are you. [REDACTED] said to Joe, "Don't you go there". I [REDACTED] said to her your responsibility is your patients, they are your priority and you should be reprimanding your staff member for this, [REDACTED] responded, "Don't you tell me how to do my Job. I [REDACTED] said to her well someone needs to, cause your obviously got your priorities wrong. [REDACTED] then stormed out of the room. I went on and said to her your Mental Health System is absolutely pathetic, you're not here to help these people you just make them worse, this is a story for Four Corners and we shall take it there.

█ for not one moment came to speak about anything, she seemed quite calm in the office writing her notes, on my way out, I went to the window and said to █ "I am not finished with you" (meaning she is not worthy of a nursing position as she has no heart for the mentally ill, my thoughts are if you have no empathy why be in such a role). █ didn't seem to be too shaken up by the whole thing because I was down the corridor and she came to the window to retaliate verbally, unfortunately I could not hear what she had to say, I do believe it may have been something like, "oh that's so professional" Not long after one of the other patients came to the courtyard when Joe was saying goodbye and she said that they were now calling the police on me, █

Just to sum this all up, this requires full investigation where my sister █ called and spoke to you █ on the Monday and asked that cameras be checked for proof as to whether my brother was being abusive.

If there is a zero tolerance policy at the █ what hope do the patients have being listened to, cause clearly they don't, this incident has been a complete and utter set up and nursing staff like █ has taken great advantage of that. As for the DON she also needs to be reprimanded of her duties because I believe as a nurse myself that these people have a duty of care to their patients. Why do we have these hospitals if you as the nursing staff are not in control, every hospital has many issues our main hospitals are dealing with drug addicted patients and various cultures that don't always agree with nursing decisions and our medical field face various situations however, never for one minute can we just kick people out because our staff are threatened, you put things in place to diffuse the situation, it's definitely not Einstein, in this case there was no such action required because there was nothing abusive in what my brother did, █ put the face to the █ days and she put her own plan in place and for this she needs to be disciplined and the patient needs to be contacted by you the hospital and feel that he has been heard, otherwise that nurse will repeatedly do this to anyone because she knows that that zero tolerance policy will work for her everytime. These people have a duty of care to the patients it should never be the facility have a duty of care to the staff without explanation because this is a perfect example of what happens.

Should this require a round table meeting my sister and I are more than happy to sit in as we are strongly supportive of our brother and know for a fact that he has done nothing wrong. I cannot even begin to imagine why our mental health patients feel so distant from the world around them, but then to go into a Clinic and almost be pushed over the edge by your nursing staff and the support of their DON is absolutely beyond me. I certainly wish that I could walk away from one of these hospitals and hold my head high and know that I changed the world for one of my patients that would be so satisfying.

***In addition to this matter; Joe states, meanwhile my psychologist has called the hospital to get my psychiatrist's number, so he can chat with him. To see what was the discharge report and does he recommend any further hospitalization. They wouldn't give him his number, they just put him through to his voicemail. To which he still hasn't heard from him. What have they got to hide?***

We would like to be contacted with an outcome of this matter, should this not be taken seriously we will take further action and you will leave us no alternative but to have both the nursing staff and DON investigated, if this means gathering patients feedback we are more than happy to do so, as we have a duty of care to our brother and are more than happy to protect those that have mental health issues and deserve nothing but the best treatment from our hospital settings. I believe your policies need to seriously be reviewed asap so that nothing like this should occur again as you have left my brother in a serious and insecure state.

**Yours truly**

[Redacted signature]