

Grace Freeman

In January I kept saying to drs my body is shutting down there is something wrong. They all wrote it off as a psych issue and didn't do anything. Next thing there are paramedics standing in my room because I'd stopped breathing from pneumonia.

Because of anxiety and giving up alcohol and trying to get my life together in one week I got to the point where I didn't eat for two weeks, I was so stressed that my body shut down physically and I spent 5 nights in a public hospital and I was extremely sick.

The last 5 days or so, I put our family dog down, I've been attending AA meetings, stressed about money, been going to the gym, trying to be a good daughter and girlfriend, And friend. I noticed my Valium and sleeping tablet use was slowly increasing so I cut back, i was having problems sleeping again, been trying so hard to be dedicated to my DBT program and trying to do the homework perfectly, I decided I was eating too much cheese and all this on an anniversary of a very traumatic event.

Well no one can be perfect and fix everything in one weekend. So of course Sunday night I was so anxious and insecure that I made my problems worse all because I was trying so hard to act as if I'm better now and it's all in the past.

Today I had DBT and was an absolute mess I couldn't stay in the room, one of the team members said "mate, all that in one weekend? You can't do it all at once I think you are putting too much pressure on yourself it's okay if you have some cheese"

I was then driving home and I felt like I was drink driving but I was sober, I was full of self hatred and anxiety and I felt that "my body is shutting down" feeling again.

██████████ and ██████████ found me in the kitchen and they said what's going on so like a waterfall everything spilled out all at once. And while the beautiful Sharon was holding me, mum said Grace just breath it's okay. They then sat with me and helped me, I went to an AA meeting and I'm home and I look sick but I'm okay.

You don't have to do everything at once and I think I even said that in a post this weekend without realising that's what I'm doing.

So please whatever is happening in your life do not run yourself so far into the ground that you are hallucinating from pneumonia, please all look after yourselves ☐

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

## Name

Miss Grace Freeman

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

Educational campaigns about complex mental health conditions. I believe there is still so much stigma around any conditions with psychosis or personality disorders. I think the public needs to see that people don't always fit the stereotype of their illness.

## 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 think the campaigns about men speaking up are a great start. I think major organisations such as the AFL being more open about mental health and opening the conversation around getting help and that speaking out is okay is making a difference. I think there needs to be deeper conversations and that there needs to be a lot more awareness around how to get help when your mental illness is more than depression or anxiety.

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

"The public health system needs to either change or put more money into the mental health triage (CATT). So many times I'm "not bad enough" for the public system but I have to sometimes wait weeks to get a public admission which I only have access to due to my parents' resources. During that 2-week period my family are required to stay home from work and remove all risky objects from my sight and hide my car keys. There needs to be more help for the people that fall in the middle ground. "

## 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.

"Difficulties finding out about appropriate programs and services, waiting lists, misdiagnoses, miscommunication between services. Not being able to access the public system because you have private health insurance. "

## 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?

"Respite, counselling, family therapy, couples therapy, financial compensation, more carers paid leave from work. Support groups, education on the particular illness "

## What can be done to attract, retain and better support the mental health workforce,

**including peer support workers?**

"Supervision, training, compensation, supportive team environment "

**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?**

Prioritize serve mental illnesses. Research and education into personality disorders. More funding so that people with debilitating mental illnesses can get more than 10 psychologist sessions a year through the mental health plan. I think there needs to be more Dialectical Behaviour therapy programs through the public or at a reasonable price so that more people can have access to them. I believe that there needs to be a priority into educating medical professionals on treating patients with psychiatric disorders without bias and not assuming all symptoms are psychological. I also believe there is a huge stigma amongst psychiatrists and mental health professionals around patients with borderline personality disorder

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

Keep the public updated and be transparent. I think there needs to be a body of people that are accountable for these changes to be implemented and be re assessed and also maintained no matter which politically party is elected or in government

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

Thank you

Dear [REDACTED],

I understand that the public health system has very limited resources and they need to assess and triage people. And as a youth worker I know that most professionals are doing the best they can. But the public mental health system is a joke.

Private psychiatrists tell you that when you can't get an appointment and are feeling suicidal or unsafe that you should call the CATT services. Well every time I have spoken to the [REDACTED] CATT team they have not been helpful. Today I was told to watch tv and the suicidal thoughts will pass. I told them my diagnosis of bipolar and borderline personality disorder and about previous suicide attempt and self harm, but because I have access to a psychiatrist in TWO days time and I don't live alone they say there is nothing they can do. And that because the thoughts have gone away in the past they will go away again.

I'm sorry but some people need some fucking help. I do have access to professionals and have a supportive family, so when I do call the CATT team it's because we need help.

I know that people being suicidal and not committing suicide is a protective factor that triage looks at but there is only so long people can go feeling like this.

If you could consider my thoughts and concerns that would be appreciated.

Regards,  
Grace Freeman