

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

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

Encourage understanding in the work place by pro actively providing sessions that openly discuss mental health issues . As a carer for an adult child with mental illness there could be information about how to best support the carers too .

## **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?**

Our experience was that it was difficult to be able to get initial help through the Crisis support line triage system due to very long waiting times .

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

not sure

## **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.**

Isolation of young people who are grappling with finding employment etc . The reliance on social media seems to negate the ability to be able to communicate in face to face situations . Finding the right support and treatment when you have never had to access it before is quite daunting.

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

"Not sure - but it seems through our experience that the sheer number of those with mental health problems is not matched by staffing numbers . When a person is facing mental health issues, it is hard for them to realise they need help. As a carer, we did not know where to turn and could have done with far better communication and help for us to understand what we were facing "

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

"Communication is vital. We were left out of the loop on many decisions that affected us and our ability to cope . Our son is an adult, and we were expected to bear the responsibility of looking after him post hospital, but it was only through sheer determination that we were able to extract answers. Currently, we are never consulted about how he is going by his case worker, and have to agonise over whether to call up - and then feel as if we are 'telling tales'. During his hospital stay , some regular sessions of face to face update would have helped us in what was an overwhelming scenario. Simple good procedures about what happens during visits ( ie being let in without extensive waiting ) , and not having to constantly chase information would have helped. We were never really told what to expect with our son , and suddenly he was discharged without

further ado . No consultation took place with us about when that would happen - it just did , and we had to deal with it. Some basic information about what to expect from a person with schizo phrenia would have been useful . "

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

Not sure

**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?**

"Once more I am not sure. Our son is under a case worker, but has not been involved with any activities or prgrams to aid his social and economic particiaption. Accessing Centre link helo has been a night mare "

**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?**

Support the carers to be able to support the person with illness and include them in the discussionProvide family support sessions so that you know what to doConisder that the carers are a vital part of the recovery chain and need to be included Crisis lines are very hard to access - more funding /staff needed who are trained appropriately to deal with both the family and the ill person

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

Funding to train staff in more realistic nubers

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

"The sense of isolation we felt has been over whelming . We were not followed up as to how we were coping with what had happened to ourfamily . The sense of frustation at having to constantly chase answers has been a constant frustration.When one is in the midst of crisis, you are not capable of following up on everything .There were times when we felt like giving up as we were not being talked to. The whole experience of being a carer has led us to wanting to be part of the Royal Commission. We want to ensure that future carers do not feel the same way."