

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

SUB. 0002.0025.0026

Name

[REDACTED]

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

"Education is the key. Educate the public with whatever tools are available that mental health is no different to heart health, diabetes health, or physical health. Remove the stigma by promoting the lives that are positive and engaging, promote the fact that as individuals we are all the same but different, but we are all human beings."

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 run a support group with over 1,400 members Australia wide for kinship carers. Preventing or limiting the impact of mental illness for us is grounded mainly around accessibility and the costs associated. The kids we care for should have free mental health access (to practitioners who are above average in competence) as should all carers. Costs and accessibility are major barriers in seeking mental health help.

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

"Remove suicide as a means to an end. It is not, many people contemplate suicide but don't go through with it due to caring commitments and not wanting to place further trauma on the children they care for. An undertaker once said to me 'suicide is very much like a brain attack in the same way we have heart attacks' We need to normalise it, not give it power by singling it out."

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.

Inaccurate information given by mental health workers together with no connection with what the person experiencing mental health needs or the needs of the carers. I am caring for my now six year old grand daughter due to inadequate help and assistance 5 + years ago.

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

lack of access to timely help lack of understanding greater stigma due to small community relations

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

They should be informed every step of the way. They should be given timely access to support and knowledge for themselves and whom they care for. They need to be listened to and heard. They need to be not dismissed or disregarded.

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

Support them and reward them. Allow them to have a certain amount of autonomy where directions during crisis are not required from an unreachable person who is not familiar with the case.

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?

"Very little, support needs to be given not only to the people but to the services working with them. Education of support people needs to be constant and ongoing."

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?

"More accommodation available for at risk people, more support for those who need a diagnosis to enter the system. More staff available, more training and more realisation that this is a dangerous area and staff safety must be a priority."

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

N/A

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

"Yes In 2013 my then 18 yr old daughter gave birth to her first and only (so far) child. Her mental health during pregnancy was not addressed. She tried to commit suicide twice. Her health, mental and physical, was not monitored after giving birth, and she suffered severe pre and post natal depression. [Had it been addressed earlier there may have been a different outcome] By the time I engaged what services I could for her, she was past the point of, and reluctant to accept, help. Fast forward two years [in that time there had been multiple suicide attempts, many visits to the ██████████ mental health unit, self injurious behaviours, inability to bond with her baby who was residing with us and many high risk taking behaviours] and we kept getting told -after every attempt at suicide- that she DID NOT have a mental health issue, it was merely behavioural! That was 2015 and she gave up reaching out for help, no one listened, no one cared and no one done a dam thing. Enter 2017 and another psyche seen her and told her in 2014 she had been diagnosed with Borderline Personality disorder. 2014.... maybe if we had that info and had worked on strategies she may have been able to be a parent. Instead her child resides permanently with us, because we (Myself, my husband and my daughter) were left believing that she was doing all this for attention, she condemns herself every day for being a failure in the eyes of the public and her daughter has missed out on her mother being her parent. No one told us anything besides, 'its behavioural, we cant help you, its not a mental health issue'. Every time the phone rang I thought it would be the one where I was asked to identify her. Our family have been let down by the mental health system and it has severely impacted our lives. If only they had told us."

"My daughter has spent many [40+] hours in the ed department of the local hospital waiting hours for a Dr, would they treat diabetics the same way? Just because you can't see it doesn't mean its not there and not a priority. Mental health = suicide!"