

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

Organisation Name

N/A

Name

Mr Andrew Schram

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

"I would point out that the Counselling profession is NOT recognised by Governments as a profession. This means numerous agencies (TAC is one example) will not fund counselling services provided by a qualified registered Counsellor such as myself, to a TAC client. However, GP's, Psychologists and Social workers CAN provide approved counselling services. So to make my position very clear: COUNSELLORS CANNOT PROVIDE EXCELLENT COUNSELLING SERVICES but SOCIAL WORKERS CAN. There is something very wrong with this system"

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?

"Counselling Associations such as CCAA PACFA and ACA already have excellent member services and requirements that their members adhere to. These Associations need to be given a level of authority to self manage Counsellors and their subsequent entry into the Medicare arena amongst others such as Governmental Organisations. Counsellors I see regularly doing a great job with clients, including clients who simply cannot pay because of their mental health issues causing them to go into debt. Having Medicare or some form of financial fee to support us with people in these situations would be great"

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

"Counselling one to one is a great way to allow troubled people to open up and express themselves, something they often cannot do with family, friends or the general public. Counsellors are well trained to manage these aspects and also to take the client along a therapy pathway to wellness using many proven techniques. I have over 50 of traumatised clients in my own Business who are now well to attest to this. "

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.

"Many people simply do not know how to find and identify a suitable Counsellor. In my situation, as a Christian Counsellor and a member of CCAA <https://ccaa.net.au/> many Christians I speak with have never heard of us but will respond with 'Oh that would be handy, how do I find a Christian Counsellor?'"

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

I know of many Christian Counsellors who do not have enough clients and ultimately find other work to be able to support their families. Quite ridiculous. There are many many people who

would benefit from meeting with a Christian Counsellor

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

n/a

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

Christian Counsellors should be supported by medicare and also the Government to provide Counselling services to Government bodies (ie TAC as an example)

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?

One on one Counselling makes consistent improvement in life skills and awareness of personal situations and the opportunities for change that exist for us all. Mental illness often stops that process and inward view becomes the norm. We help them look outward and rejoin normal society and become productive members once 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?

"Counsellors to become accredited with Government agencies (eg TAC and many more) and be eligible for financial support directly with clients, particularly those who cannot pay due to their poor mental health. Medicare support seems to me to be appropriate."

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

Support the Counselling profession financially so we can properly work with mentally ill clients who are unable to pay themselves!!! We will make one on one lasting change if we are empowered to do our job!!!

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

Thankyou for taking the time to investigate and report