



28 June 2019

## PUBLIC HEARINGS TO START WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

People with a lived experience will be the first witnesses as part of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System when public hearings start on Tuesday 2 July at the Melbourne Town Hall.

Those giving evidence on day one will include former Commonwealth Minister Andrew Robb AO and former AFL player and mental health advocate, Wayne Schwass. Both will give evidence in a personal capacity related to their experience with mental health.

Other evidence on the first day will come from two community witnesses with lived experience of mental health.

Commission Chair Penny Armytage said the Commission wants to hear from a number of different perspectives and the hearings will be an important way to formally collect evidence from around 90 people including experts, frontline workers and community witnesses.

"People with a lived experience of mental health and carers will bring a unique perspective that is instrumental to the ongoing work of this Commission," Ms Armytage said.

"In order for this Royal Commission to get the best possible outcomes for a future mental health system, we rely on the willingness of people to share what can sometimes be a very traumatic experience with the current mental health system.

"We have also heard powerful stories of hope from people living engaged and productive lives despite some of the challenges they may have experienced with the system.

"Unlike some of the other Royal Commissions, our hearings will focus on addressing system wide issues rather than investigating individual incidents or cases."

There will be a dedicated day of rural hearings in Maryborough, in the Shire of Central Goldfields on Monday 15 July. The Commission will also consider issues specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities at a hearing at the Aborigines Advancement League in Thornbury on Tuesday 16 July.

The hearings are on until 26 July and will run daily between 10am-1pm and 2-4pm. Venues will open to the public from 9.45am daily. Anyone can attend the hearings and you do not need to register, however there is limited capacity at each venue. The hearings will be live streamed from the Commission's website each day. More information about the hearings and witnesses can be found at [www.rcvmhs.vic.gov.au/hearings](http://www.rcvmhs.vic.gov.au/hearings).

The Commission is still accepting online submissions **until 5 July** at [www.rcvmhs.vic.gov.au](http://www.rcvmhs.vic.gov.au).

If you need help to make a submission or have any questions, please call **1800 00 11 34** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm) or email [contact@rcvmhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:contact@rcvmhs.vic.gov.au). The Commission can also be contacted using a phone interpreter service on 03 7005 3010.

*If you or a family member has immediate concerns or requires assistance, contact beyondblue on 1300 224 636 or Lifeline on 13 11 14.*