

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

Organisation Name

N/A

Name

Mr Michael Gannaway

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

"I have been studying nursing and occupational therapy the past three years and have been told that one of the roles of a nurse is the role of educating the public so that informed consent can be given and to assist those within the community to make informed lifestyle choices that can be based on relevant evidence based information. I feel that more could be done to facilitate this role via public/social media. My mother was a journalist until she recently retired and often discussed press releases that never made it into print (in her paper at least) that had been sent to her via the Victoria police media department. It would be great if a branch of mental health professionals (including psychologists) were set up to educate the public. I will give an example of how I would like to see this idea put into practice. A few years ago Malcolm Turnbull was criticised for drinking a beer at a football match while holding a baby. The lady that made the criticism gave her opinion which was very subjective, and then what followed was lots of subjective opinion-based discussions resulted throughout the media. If a team were set up that was trained to provide society with objective facts related to the effects of Alcohol and the statistics related to the pros and cons of alcohol's influence on a social level, the argument could be of actual benefit to society. This and other arguments could be used to improve people's understanding of the challenges that face those who are given the task of making decisions that are evidence based. Giving the general public a realistic historical account of our knowledge base within the western world could generate more trust in the health system and those who are given the great task of creating legislation and policies. Having a government initialised campaign, booklet or information dvd's that are able to educate the public of the process and evidence based research that led to our education system being what it is, the bill of rights being what it is and our mental health system becoming what it is from a biological and neurological perspective that details the evidence based rationale for current policies and procedures. This account of history as described above could potentially begin during convict times and then describe how the age of enlightenment or age of reason has progressed research and practice up until the present time. I feel that having other mental health experts other than psychiatrists have input into the DSM-5 was simultaneously a huge and tiny step forward (it was a step forward). Education into biological process let's enable people to make informed choices through knowledge of themselves. At present most people do not have the capacity to give basic informed consent with respect to basic decisions of health and wellbeing. People are making the best choices they can to survive and function without having the knowledge base or critical thinking skills to allow real autonomy of choice. It is up to the public health and education systems to begin using social media or informercials in doctors and dentists' offices, centrelink etc. as platforms to educate people of their biological systems, form and functions. Show people how complicated they are, what is known and what is not known. Allow and encourage academics to make their opinions public. "

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?

"Beyond blue and the be me program is brilliant Thank you - Julia Gillard. ?? and all those involved. More support in early education (including childcare), primary and secondary teachers from occupational therapists. We need to be able to give people the volition and motivation to get out and become beneficial active members of society. "

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

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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.

"Mental illness is judged on a scale described by academics who have qualifications that give them the skills to formulate best practice concepts. We are beginning to really understand how interactions with our environment as children can have an influence on how our brain functions when elderly. Mental illness (disorders) is/are defined by level of disorder caused. We should be looking towards creating environments that foster situations that people thrive instead of accepting environments that are accepting of people who are functioning well in spite of the less than great situation. Beyond blue and the be me program is brilliant Thank you - Julia Gillard. ?? and all those involved. More support in early education (including childcare), primary and secondary teachers from occupational therapists. We need to be able to give people the volition and motivation to get out and become beneficial active members of society. "

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

Use Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory as a key to assist with the Education of society in general with respect to history (include a system of time as a part of the ecological system). Teach people to understand their past and give them the language skills and ability to relate theirs and their ancestors experiences to how this may have affected them biologically. Treat occupational deficits (not just paid occupations) that have been created by a society that was founded in pretty poor conditions. We have come a long way but still have so much more developing to do. WE SHOULD CONSIDER A UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME. After this election just gone I can not help but believe this concept would be considered in our current society - I feel that those that are able to hold high paying jobs believe that those that cant are too weak and should simply be removed.

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

EDUCATION - The public health system has a public educational role related to duty of care that needs to be fulfilled requiring all people within our society having knowledge of their biological systems so as to be able to make autonomous informed consent at any time in their future. For adequate knowledge to be present education must be given from a young age and continued so

that knowledge is present prior to engagement due to emergency or illness.

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

More staff. More research.

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?

"introduce a universal basic income accompanied by occupational therapists that are trained to assist the unemployed to find meaning in their lives and organise their time by taking on roles that are beneficial to society and themselves. Occupational therapists should be employed as permanent staff within childcare centres, kindergartens, primary and secondary schools so as to provide assistance with occupational health as well as to become a source of reference/data for the purpose of further development."

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?

PREVENTION - mostly within early childhood education.

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

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

"I have found while working in early childhood and in primary school that educators are struggling to manage behavioural issues and in childcare their is virtually no educational benefit to the children (CHILDREN ARE NOT PROVIDED WITH AN ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH THEY CAN THRIVE). - I would like our education system to put research into the benefits of a system similar to that of the montessori method where both academic and practical education is gained, each child learns at their own pace and the level of education is of a higher standard than most environments I have worked in. I have worked as a relief worker in childcare for almost 12yrs and have worked at between 200 to 300 childcare centres within a field of Pakenham to Point cook and Mornington to Macedon. I have only worked with approximately 20 people (being generous) that are competent educators as I feel that the evidence based research that has influenced our current practice has developed so fast that very few people have been able to practice using procedural memory. The educational and behaviour management strategies are forced which influences the flow as the adult has to adapt not just to each individual child and situation but also to a system based on a knowledge base that was not learnt via observation from an early age but from books. It is going to take time for society to change so that best practice is performed more easily. "