

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

## Organisation Name

N/A

## Name

Miss Misato Powell

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

"More access to support systems, not just for those in critical need. Prevention support should be easier to access for individuals but also their peers/employers to make the right choices in helping. It's hard enough navigating it alone, but when those around you don't understand it extremely detrimental to one's sense of self. "

### **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?**

"For under 25s Headspace is an organisation which is helping a lot of young people get early intervention and treatment. But in this day and age, those reaching 30 are still struggling, financially and don't have as much access to support without being lumped into the public system. There needs to be more support for those from 25-30+ who are still young and may not have had support or missed out on Headspace."

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

"I don't think there is much, the hotlines are generic. There is no sense of urgency, unless you have already hurt yourself. I have called many hotlines, had the public system involved and they had told me on the brink of suicide that I was still not 'acute' enough to be admitted into hospital. (Even though I was having daily suicidal ideation, and began self-harming again)"

### **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.**

"There is no direct support, every agency, website, community support group brushes you off to someone else or tells you flat out they can't help unless you're on the NDIS. The public system discharges you, and unless you have money you cannot afford to pay \$250+ a month for private psychiatric services. Even then, they discharge you and let you fester. "

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

"Support is the biggest thing, accessibility, being treated with kindness within organisations meant to support those with mental health issues (eg. Centrelink) The damage that the lack of this can have on people is immense, those with anxiety find it hard enough to make a phone call, let alone travel to job seeker meetings etc."

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

"They need more access and support, guidance and help in supporting someone with mental

illness, they should be encouraged to be involved and actively given support and access to help their loved ones. Dedicated time spent educating and, listening to the family and carers is crucial."

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

"Make it easier to understand what the role would require, provide them with the ability to speak out and fund them so they can continue to do the work that many can't. Assist those who are highly functioning with mental illness, or past illness access programs to help get them degrees to practice. "

**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?**

"Unless you're on NDIS (even then I'm unsure how much support you receive) or spent numerous hours researching there is not much. On the other hand, if you've hit rock bottom and plan on committing suicide/attempt to you may get help and support from the public system. Otherwise it is costly and limited. (Private insurance - mental health waiver) Less forms, paperwork and make it easier for GPs to know and support those with mental illness. They are the first contact for most suffering from mental illness. "

**Thinking about what Victoria's mental health system should ideally look like, tell us what areas and reform ideas you would like the Royal Commission to prioritise for change?**

"The costs of psychiatric and psychologists for those on benefits as there is always a massive waitlist for public and affordable professionals. Affordable health insurance for those on benefits, or concession cards. Accessibility to day programs included in health insurance, as the cost of private outpatient treatment is ridiculous and the wait lists for public are far too long. Immediate support or a caseworker to those struggling, referral through a GP for this. "

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

"Educate, the public, the professionals and understand through lived in experience the difficulties those with mental illness face. Make it easier for those who need support to have access, give helplines/hotlines more resources to put those in crisis in touch with someone who can actually help. "

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

"I have been through my own battle, I have struggled with depression and anxiety from a young age. I never had the support of family so this entire process has continued to make my recovery journey even harder. Until getting into private hospital, I had been sent to numerous psychologists, psychiatrists and have had the crisis intervention team involved (who made things much worse) I have contacted numerous support groups, organisations and have either been told I need to be on NDIS or given generic information they provide to everyone. I have been warned by medical professionals that getting on the NDIS is a long tedious process, and have lost my job during this time. (Due to mental health reasons). The lack of understanding and support is horrific, I can only imagine what it would be like having to deal purely with the public system. "