

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

## Organisation Name

N/A

## Name

Mrs Nicolette Armstrong

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

"More television advertisements. We have ads about smoking, drink/drug driving, driving whilst using a mobile. But nothing to help promote mental illnesses, no ads to show or describe what it is like to live with a mental illness, no ads to show where to go when in crisis. More advertisements may open up more communication lines for people suffering. Most people have a hard time because they don't know where to go when they need the assistance most. "

### **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?**

"A lot of the time it is hard for people suffering with mental illness to be able to even determine that they are suffering. People who struggle with psychosis have no perception of reality. Something needs to be put in place and implemented for those that suffer severely to be followed up. They have crisis teams for when those suffering are self harming or suicidal but as soon as they feel you're even slightly better, you are pushed out and left to your own device. There are quite a few good programs like dbt and cbt but there isn't enough of them available for patients to attend, they need more open programs so it's not a 12 month wait. People need treatment straight away not months away. "

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

Availability in psychiatric units. So many people who are feeling suicidal are turned away from being admitted to a psychiatric unit because there isn't enough beds. It's hard enough for people in that mindset to open up and ask for help without then being turned away. Because then they feel it is worthless in asking for help.

### **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.**

"When treatment isn't followed through. When people can't afford psychologists or psychiatrists. Being made to feel like your situation isn't serious enough for intervention. At the moment if you're in hospital if you have shown no signs of self harm or suicidal thoughts then you get sent home, even if you're still really unwell. "

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

"There are quite a few services that help with mental health, but they only go so far. It's like hitting a dead end and not being able to know where to go next. Not everyone will need the same treatment, there needs to be more information and links on these sites in order for people in crisis

to find where and what they can do. "

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

"They do offer peer workers for carers and families but they need programs for those to help learn how to deal with loved ones with mental health issues. They need more information on being a carer. It's hard for families and carers to understand what their loved one is going through, let alone how to help them or when to intervene and get outside help. I know my husband had no idea what to do when I was in crisis and didn't want to upset me even though he knew I needed help. Maybe a monthly or fortnightly support group for carers and families that have outside facilities and people that come and speak at the groups. "

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

N/A

**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?**

Promoting the support of mental health in social situations. Helping out with anxiety issues. Most people have so much trouble with anxiety and it confines them to their homes or their comfort zone. This then prevents them from going out into the community and taking up any opportunities that may be beneficial to them.

**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?**

"Mental health has only in the last few years began to be promoted more, but not enough. It's just as important as every other issue that arises. At each hospital I believe they need a community based mental health unit that doesn't just focus on those in crisis. A unit that people can attend when they feel they are not doing so well but not yet at the point they feel they want to end their life. Prevention is the key, if stopping people's mental health issues from getting too deep and hard to get out of then the numbers of those needing help when in crisis and suicides may decrease. "

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

Proper funding and experts need to be allocated. It would also be great for those who are studying the mental health sector to be included. The more they learn the best they will be able to help their future patients.

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

The stigma in hospitals of not being suicidal enough needs to end. It's unfair and unjust for individuals to make a decision on how they believe an individual is coping