

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

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

"I have in the past been a victim of family violence by a female perpetrator. It has been something that has broken me. I was once a strong man with a shining career. I now struggle with mental health issues daily. My situation is not as uncommon as current media and government campaigns might like to portray it. The stigma and discrimination I bring to the attention of the commission is not that of a struggle with mental health - I've not experienced any discrimination due to this. It is how my world has become one that is waging a war on men and masculinity - when it is my honest view that I and the majority of men are not toxic individuals. Many if not most of us want to dedicate our lives to the happiness of our partner. I don't want to diminish the plight of any women or children who experience violence at the hands of a maladjusted man. They need and deserve all the help they can get - and they should get it. But if you take time to observe who is committing violent crimes - who perpetrates controlling abusive behaviour in the home - who murders children - who is the actual abuser, day in day out - it's not consistent with the balance of message broadcast to the country on almost a daily basis. Airtime is given to the problem of male suicide. What could be the causes of this? I hear no narrative that dares to link male suicide to abuse in the home by a female partner - but I feel if this were studied properly the results would be revealing. I have two requests that would help me emotionally. Balance the public message on domestic violence. Tell the whole story. Go after toxic behaviour from all sources. Make support services available to men too. Count them in. Because there have been times when all I needed was a place to go and someone to talk to. "

## **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?**

"I'm not sure what is already working well. There are many helplines but they offer a standard formula. My experience is when mental health breakdowns happen the help is needed there and then, not by appointment for \$250 weeks from now. There needs to be volume. and clamp down on negative messages in media that vilify all men as violent animals "

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

This I don't know. Frankly when my thoughts have turned suicidal - as they have in the past - I have been reluctant to call a help line because I fear the police showing up at my door and goodness knows what else that would follow 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.**

"I think there is a major problem with today's society that has been brought about by technology and media, including broadcast, streaming and social media. I believe there is a global pandemic

of narcissism that has caused people - not only young people - to promote then measure their own worth through online publishing. I don't feel this has affected me directly, this is not my condition. But the impact caused by narcissistic character of others has hurt me very much. But on the actual problem, I know people who spend the majority of their day photographing themselves and building up hordes of online followers. There should be more promotion of life without the device."

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

I'm not aware of the balance. I imagine lack of security and opportunities in some areas could be a problem. Substance abuse is bound to be a factor. I'd like to see stiffer penalties that actually get enforced to discourage people from getting into drugs.

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

It could be any of the above. Accessible community centres that are always open and always ready.

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

Very likely to pay them a living wage and provide them a role the community recognises as essential. Take it out of the private sector - those commercial mental health support companies are just terrible. You know as soon as you try to engage them they are just a costed service your employer contracted to provide minimum viable support to employees. Available appointments are rare so the services don't help. The contractors they themselves hire spread their services across jobs so they can make it pay. They come and go. Managing mental health is not about managing P&L.

**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?**

I have no idea.

**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?**

Just make a service available and make centres accessible. Make sure the staff are qualified to help im matters of mental health. I once went to an appointment with a private psychologist who decided the way to tackle my issues was to read poetry to me while he sat there with a tea cosy on his head. That hour cost me \$200 before he ushered me out so he could go home.

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

I don't know.

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

Not right now.