

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

Organisation Name

N/A

Name

Miss Nita Jago

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

"Public health campaigns (media) normalising mental health as being apart of the health of people's bodies. Campaigns that are strategic and culturally appropriate for individual communities. Coming from a migrant background this is very important to bring understanding across cultures. This is a topic that unite Australian's as it affects all of us. Also keep up the focus on Men's mental health - there is still disproportionate amounts of young men committing suicide, they need to be a focus group. Approach this with input from all disciplines. A Health in All Policies approach (consider health in all governmental policies, not just health policy so that each policy supports the other). This should therefore not just include input from service providers and health workers. Include local councils, schools, community groups, religious groups, sporting groups, cultural societies for effective ways to reduce stigma."

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?

"Huge question. Prevention is always better than cure. Prevention will need a Health in All Policies approach, include input from healthy town planners - ie. ones that promote greening of urban spaces, planning for community connectivity, safe walkways/cycleways to promote exercise for better mental health. Community groups, local councils, schools etc. Mental Healthcare Plans accessible through GP's are effective during acute stages of illness. GP's should be kept up to date with local support services so they can refer and connect people, rather than just give out meds. And more incentives to attract bulk billed psychologists outside of metro areas. "

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

"Lifeline Australia is a fantastic service that is still managing to operate even on a shoestring. Give them more money to keep the phone lines open. Funding for more research into early signs of vulnerability and also ways to build resilience in individuals, communities and health systems that support them."

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.

"Huge question. A Health in All Policies approach is again needed as there are multiple stressors on people's lives that contribute to poor mental health. Current pressing issues. Environments support good mental health - cities are stressful environments that are becoming more populated, appropriate infrastructure for continual population rise is needed. Greening of urban spaces have shown to improve mental health in European cities. Ability to access public transport and/or walk/ride to work provides opportunities for physical exercise which promotes good mental health. Lack of affordable housing is a huge stress for many Australians. Low wages and rising

cost of living. Lack of resilience also prevents good mental health. Unfortunately there will be ongoing stressors in life and these will increase with the ecological crisis. Building resilience in individuals, communities, health systems and governments will be key to promoting good mental health through these difficult times. There is bountiful research on ways to promote resilience in populations which needs to be drawn upon. Treatment, support and services should be built with this in mind. As above keep GP's and health service providers linked in with each other and updated so that an efficient referral service can operate."

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

Incentives and better pay for mental health professionals to work in regional/rural/remote areas. Provide mental health training for all health workers in all communities. Subsidise mental health related university courses to boost professional workforce. How many universities in Victoria offer postgraduate courses in mental health/psychology that are commonwealth supported? Pressure the government to make this happen.

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

Employer support via EAP (Employee Assistance Programs). Make access to centrelink for carers less difficult.

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

As mentioned before subsidised courses and postgraduate programs. Better wages for health workers as they are being exposed on a daily basis to harmful and traumatic stories. Supported leave for mental health workers (Centrelink/employer).

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?

N/A

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?

"Hopefully this Royal Commission will not opt for a band-aid approach to this multifaceted problem. Victoria's mental health system needs to be supported by a state-wide multi-sector approach as a multitude of factors affect people's mental health. Prevention is better than cure and will require cooperation from multiple sectors. Please reach out to other sectors of the government to include determinants affecting people's mental health such as Health organisations (other than those in mental health) Building, infrastructure, transport and town planning. Educational institutions Sporting bodies Employers Banking and financial systems Centrelink etc"

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

"Place the focus on prevention and primary care (acute care is costly and unsustainable), put in-place supportive policies with a multisector approach to address determinants of mental health

and build resilience in individuals, communities, health systems and governments."

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

N/A