

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

Organisation Name

N/A

Name

Ms Katie Price

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

Supporting community education programs provided by organisations like Black Dog Institute and BeyondBlue. Engaging with media to ensure representations of mental ill health are accurate. Using the phrase mental ill health rather than mental illness. Rather than focusing on overt stigma, acknowledging that real harm derives from the feeling that mental ill health is something you should keep secret (as opposed to physical ill health).

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?

"In my experience, as someone who has been diagnosed with bipolar affective disorder type II and PTSD, I think the process begins and ends with your GP. Thus, properly funding GPs and access to extended appointments is vital. Encouraging peer-based conversations is a game changer (e.g. RUOK Day) but is there enough guidance around what to do if someone says no."

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

"Crisis counselling services like Lifeline and the Suicide Call Back Service. If someone reports to emergency reporting suicidal thoughts, they should be immediately moved into a monitored waiting area with privacy and appropriate lighting. More psychiatric emergency beds. I wish I'd been given the advice to find a temporary physical outlet for the pain, like holding an ice cube, or flicking a really thick rubber band on your wrist. That advice has since saved my life."

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.

"It is incredibly costly. Managing my mental health costs around \$10,000 per year. I live at home at 34 in order to afford my medical expenses. You have to be your own advocate and self-direct your care."

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

Medicare requires a drastic overhaul to reflect that chronic conditions do not just affect the elderly.

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

Extending psychological support to carers.

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

"Better pay, recognition, OHS conditions and status."

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?

Everyone is capable of meaningful social and economic participation but so often the impediments become insurmountable.

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?

"- Access to psychological services should be of a par with any other specialist - Consider the development of psychiatric emergency departments that provide specialist and appropriately adapted emergency services - Mental health training for all front line services (fire, police, ambulance) - Encouraging conversations around mental health across all work places"

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

Funding

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

I live in Sydney but I studying in Melbourne. I am terrified about what would happen if I were to be hospitalised whilst in Melbourne but am equally concerned about the privacy implications of the My Health Record. Since being diagnosed I have worked tirelessly to use my story to smash stigma. I think feeling like mental ill health is something that needs to be kept secret might be even more insidious than overt stigma.