

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

## Organisation Name

N/A

## Name

Mrs Ingrid Taylor

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

"There needs to be more education in regards to mental illness. Mental illness is real and the growing issue is lack of understanding both from the general public and communities. There needs to be awareness, whether it be in the form of television commercials, media attention (writing articles with factual information), education in schools, education for teachers and principals in schools as well as medical professionals. Local GP's aren't trained in the field of mental illness and often patients walk out of the clinic feeling confused. Australians have a 'she'll be right mate'" attitude and whilst at times this is a great quality to have the reality is that not everyone can deal with everyday stresses. Some people don't have family support and often enough feel isolated and have no-one to turn to, talk to or just feel like they belong to a community. This is very common in regional areas where there is not a variety of resources that you may find in the major cities or metro areas. There needs to be a safe place that they can turn to and we could implement something like foster homes in regional areas for people that need the extra support. This will enable people to volunteer their time to meet with people in need, they can either have a coffee with them or go for a walk. Majority of the time people suffering from mental illness just need to have someone there to either listen or keep them company. Sometimes words don't even need to be exchanged. The more education there is about mental illness I believe the more empathetic people will be when dealing or liaising with someone who is suffering."

### **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?**

The issue is that our hospital system is stretched and there is a lack of ability to assist all patients that are suffering from mental illness. From my experience if the patient is not suicidal or considered to be high risk they are sent home with minimal information to assist them and their family. Families suffer as there is limited assistance for support to help them understand how to deal with the person suffering from mental illness. The 10 mental health sessions from Medicare does not work as the patient needs to pay for the service with the psychologist and then claim via Medicare. The downside of this service is that patients won't attend as it costs too much money for their consultation and if they are financially stretched then the likelihood of them making an appointment is nil to none. There needs to be more psychiatric hospitals that patients can go to to get the help they desperately need. If a patient wants to commit themselves into the hospital then they should be able to do so on the day not told that there is a 3-6 month waiting period. Why are Australians paying private health insurance when you can't get your loved one into a hospital for treatment?

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

"The unfortunate part is that you can't prevent suicide. If a person wants to commit suicide they will find a way to do it. The answer is, more accessibility to psychiatric hospitals and treatment to

be immediate. Too often patients are left to their own devices and there is no follow up. Families are forced to take time off work to ensure that their loved one seeks the help they so desperately need. This leads to more stress on the individual and the family. For the individual they feel like a burden and for the family they feel helpless. This leads to a vicious circle with no end in sight. "

**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 a real gap between services offered and the reality of being able to be seen by a mental health professional within a timely manner. As explained above there are too many cases and no follow up by the doctor or there is a waiting list to see a professional or the professional that you have been referred to is not taking any new patients. There is also a lack of communication between their patients local doctor and when they are referred to a mental health professional. It is a case of the left hand does not talk to the right hand.

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

"Lack of education Lack of resources in regional areas Lack of support Cases where the system has let a patient down and they have succeeded in taking their own life. We need more money put into our health system, more research on the effects of drugs and alcohol associated with mental health. Build more support networks/groups that offer not just support the the sufferer but the the families as well."

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

"Support, guidance, reading material, education Too many times that family are left picking up the pieces and don't get the rest or break they need living with a person suffering from mental illness. This causes families to break up, become isolated. There should be a network (similar to grief counselling) where people can go and share their stories with others and learn from each other as well as offer support and understanding that they wouldn't get from either their extended family circle or friends."

**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?**

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?**

N/A

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

N/A

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

N/A