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

Organisation Name
N/A

Name
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What are your suggestions to improve the Victorian communitys understanding of mental illness and reduce stigma and discrimination?
To have all emergency department nurses to be trained in dealing with mental health patients so they have a better understanding of mental health struggles to reduce stigma. Teachers in school and tafe to also be educated and trained more to understand mental health issues. I also think people's lived experience of mental health issues are important to raise awareness and reduce stigma say in the media. I think documentaries of people living with mental health illness that can be available on the tv would be a great way of reaching   many people. My idea of a documentary content would be people's stories with mental illness and how they feel and even the thoughts that come with their mental illness would contribute to a greater understanding of what living with mental illness is like.

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 think people need to encouraged that it is okay to speak up and tell a trusted person they are struggling . People think mental illness is a weakness and sometimes people are often afraid to speak up when they have a problem but there needs to be more awareness that it's not a weakness and mental illness is the same as any physical illness. We don't choose to have it and mental health deserves treatment just like any other physical illness. Preventing mental illness it isn't always possible but being healthy, eating well, sleeping well is important. We need to have a social life and a purpose in life like a job ,,volunteering or hobbies..People need to know there are professionals out there and enough supports when they it is needed. Always talking about how you're feeling is really important so people can help you. "

What is already working well and what can be done better to prevent suicide?
"I have personal experience with suicide attempts feeling suicidal and being involved with the mental health system including emergency departments and mental health facilities whilst in crisis.There needs to be a lot of improvement in the system to prevent suicides. There is professional support available these days and people can get access to helpline services like lifeline which can be helpful for some people when in a crisis. It is however a broken mental health system . I've lost two friends to suicide who were let down by the system if they had gotten better help to keep them safe they might still be here .   This is not just my friends I've been let down by the system. People are denied help in times of crisis ,this is due to the mental health facilities being underfunded and overwhelmed by the amount of people needing help.Beds are not available in our psychiatric wards and this can be the cause of suicide . Access to proper help when you are at risk of suicide is vital.   A massive Increase of funding needs to be made for the mental health care in Victoria. This increase in funding would mean more beds will be available in psychiatric facilities which will mean more lives will be saved . Community mental health services need to be expanded so more people will get the help and treatment they desperately need.   This

funding needs to be enough to go across all the mental health facilities in Victoria and Australia to start to make an improvement . I also think when suicidal people present to the emergency department and have attempted suicide or are not safe but can not get a bed in the psychiatric unit due to bed shortages , there needs to be a space in the hospital or emergency department that is secure where patients are able to stay and be safe until they are able to get a bed in the facility . I think this would be a great idea to help people stay safe and stay alive when there are bed shortages but they do not feel safe enough to go home . It needs to be a locked and secure ward so people can not escape and attempt to hurt themselves with trained staff who can provide them with support and medication until the psychiatric bed is available ."

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.

"Things that make it harder to experience good mental health I think is all about the world we live in social media is something that creates comparison and also cyberbullying occurs which can result in poor mental health and even suicide. Family violence family troubles , disability , grief are all factors th at can contribute to bad mental health and traumatic life experiences is a massive factor in a lot of mental illnesses. Having someone to talk to you can trust is important and again reaching out to professional services if you think you're experiencing a mental health problem. Local support should be available. Staff must be well trained and their results analysed."

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

I think there are alot of reasons communities have poorer mental health outcomes. People with disabilities might experience discrimination or bullying and that might trigger a mental health issue. People living in the country that are far away from mental health help and treatment could be difficult . Concurring issues like anorexia or substance abuse could contribute to poorer outcomes. Therefore people need both these conditions treated properly for their mental health to improve . We need more skilled professional support in city and rural areas so people can access support easily when they need it .

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

Mental illness can be very hard and put a strain on families and carers and sometimes the family members need respite. If the person with mental illness needs respite then it needs to be a secure and safe place to stay and have people their who understand.

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?

There should be more skills training for people with mental illness and vocational guidance. I think there should be more companies available to help people with mental illness get jobs . I think that

should even include goals to building up to work and helping people to achieve getting a job.

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?
I think ideally the system should be able to provide every person struggling with mental health the proper support and treatment they need to get better.   The system needs to be commited to suicide prevention and provide enough funding to make a dramatic change in the system.

What can be done now to prepare for changes to Victorias mental health system and support improvements to last?
It would be good to have paid professionals available to talk to suicidal people that could provide more ongoing support than services like life line. It's a critical time to change the Mental Health System in general and that will require government commitment and a massive boost in funds that are ongoing every year to achieve a better system that has better support. As suicide is the leading cause of death in Australia it needs intensive investigation into the numerous causes and solutions .

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