

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?

Continue to share public profiles on mental health and support organisations. Raise awareness on government funded/subsidised treatment options as financial burdens to treatment may deter people from seeking help.

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?

"Famous people sharing their experiences of living with mental health, particularly powerful to young people. MAINLY, supporting people to get support by training GP's better in relation to mental health. GP's are the first point-of-call for patients and in my personal experience, GP's don't see to care! They have no empathy. It takes a lot of courage for a patient to firstly acknowledge and accept that they have a mental health condition, followed by taking steps to seek help for their disease. GP's should not be so dismissive to mental health problems. If patients have a good 'first experience' when seeking help, it may encourage them on their journey to recovery. Needless to say, the reverse is true. The consequences of this are much more serious! A family member took the courageous step of visiting a GP to obtain a first mental health care plan. The GP (note, with an empty waiting room!) simply reprimanded the patient for not booking a double appointment! Imagine how this made the patient feel when they presented already feeling stressed/anxious/mild depression."

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

"Public awareness of support groups such as beyond blue, RU OK. What can be done better? - GP's actually assessing the patient fully. Asking if they have any suicidal thoughts. I have had to obtain multiple mental health care plans over the years. One GP responded to my concerns with ""I don't know what your problem is""! Another GP has completed a mental health care plan without me even being in the room! I made an appointment to see her and she said because it was the end of the day, she couldn't concentrate to do the paperwork and asked that I collect from reception the following day! I was asked no questions that needed to be answered on the care plan! Another GP completed the care plan and asked me just one question, ""is it anxiety or depression""! "

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.

"As above! The visit to the GP can be a make or break situation. If not handled appropriately, the patient is likely to leave feeling helpless. The examples noted above are, in my opinion, negligent. How can a GP complete such an important document without actually assessing the patient. To actually declare that the patient has no suicidal thoughts, when in fact, the GP has not ascertained

this. Then what, a patient leaves and commits suicide?? GP's receive a considerable payment for completing the care plan and should take it more seriously. Also, employers can assist by offering ""wellbeing days"" where employees are encouraged to take time for self-care. The government can offer subsidised meditation/mindfulness/exercise classes, as a preventative approach. Taking a pill is not a long-term fix!"

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

Poor GP practises!

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

"Family members would benefit from being offered an equal ""care plan"" to receive subsidised professional advice in how to support their loved one with mental health."

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

unable to comment

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?

GP training and accountability when it comes to mental health.

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

Invest in providing subsidised preventative approaches such as meditation/mindfulness etc.

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

no

Friday 5th July 2019

To whom it may concern,

It is encouraging that mental health is being taken so seriously by the royal commission.

I have significant concerns in relation to:

- GP awareness and empathy of mental health issues
- GP's completing mental health care plans in a negligent manner

I have noted these concerns in the report, as well as some other suggestions. In my opinion, for a patient to present to a GP with a mental health problem, it is like a first responder attending an emergency. Get it wrong and there could be significant consequences. If a GP is not adequately trained, or does not seem to "care enough" to ask the right questions of patients presenting with mental health conditions, then what could be the potential next step for that patient? It's frightening. I have had to visit GP's numerous times for mental health care plans, and I am shocked to the lack of attention given to my mental health. One GP completed the mental health care plan when I wasn't even in the room! No questions were asked. Luckily I am aware that it's just all part of the Medicare process and that the piece of paper is required for me to get to who I really need to see; a trained psychologist. I am aware of some patients who have been put-off getting further help for their mental health condition, based on that initial interaction with their GP. This is frightening. Especially when GP's receive a significant payment for literally signing this care plan, not seeming to care what it means for the patient.

I hope that this is one area that can be improved during the review process.

Kind regards

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