

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

## Organisation Name

N/A

## Name

Miss Laura Mason

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

"- There should be mental health units being studied in primary schools as well as high schools and I mention primary schools because so many adolescents will come into their teens and suffer from mental illnesses that they might not realise are present because of the lack of education. I was one of those teens. - When studying psychology units in primary and secondary, there needs to be a comprehensive teaching of all different mental illnesses, different ways they can affect people i.e. their ability to work and hold down a stable job etc. - Workplaces, ESPECIALLY corporate ones, need to have seminars as a cohort about mental illnesses and the systemic attitudes employers can have against their employees with mental illness or hiring people who also have mental illnesses. This is so important as many people may not be able to work in one industry because of their mental illness, but they may be able to work in another. I have a diagnosed eating disorder so I can't work in the food industry. But I can work in retail. - Also seminars at workplaces and facilitating open conversations between employers and employees will hopefully create a healthier attitude in the workplace about mental health, so then if someone is struggling at work, they are less likely to be seen as weak and will be more willing to be honest with their employer about what they're dealing with. - The ads that are seen on tv about like texting and driving, drink driving etc. and they are usually quite shocking; there need to be those on tv about like suicide prevention, eating disorders, trauma, ocd!!! More media about will bring more awareness and information."

### **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 it's good that there are ads about anxiety and depression on tv but what about suicide prevention and other mental illnesses? - The private health care system is great as their professionals are highly trained, specialised in other mental illnesses and have so many avenues available to help people recover. Only thing is is that it is too expensive for a large amount of people."

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

"It's good that everyone knows Lifeline is the organisation to contact, but the thing is is that they just refer you onto other mental health organisations who will refer you onto another one!! Lifeline need to have the training, funding and resources to be able to have Lifeline specific clinics where you can get help for suicidal feelings, the ability to go inpatient in a Lifeline clinic and really tackle it head on. There's none of that."

### **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.**

"I don't think there's one answer for ""What makes it hard for people to experience good mental health"" because there are so many factors that can lead people to suffer from poor mental health and/or mental illnesses. There are genetics and a whole list of environmental factors that contribute to mental health issues, there are websites literally listing risk factors. and all of that's true! Everyone is different and will develop mental illnesses due to different things. But there's no one thing that is the only reason why people will suffer from bad mental health. I will say then when people start suffering from poor mental health, a lot of the time organisations like [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] don't cut it. I suffered through being referred to these shareholders and all they did was make empty promises, misdiagnose me, contribute to my self-hatred and only created a measly safety plan for when I was feeling unsafe. I felt so unsupported and so unstable with such a low level of help that I tried to commit suicide many times."

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

Literally people need to be educated on risk factors for different mental illnesses. And also educated on why mental illness is so prevalent among different minorities! I'm a gay 20 year old female and a lot of my mental illness and rage also stemmed from my confusion about my sexuality. The government needs to focus on minorities and educate people!!!!

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

"Whether private or public, there has never been any support for my parents when I was still living at home. I suffer from an eating disorder, PTSD, depression and anxiety and although I finally got the help I needed through our private health care, my parents were left to fend for themselves. Sure there are family therapists but that was added cost to when I was already inpatient in the [REDACTED]. I don't know the answer but carers do not have any involvement in terms of the recovery of their loved ones, nor any information coming from the professional who is treating them. "

**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?**

There should be no financial accessibility barriers. Period.

**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