

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?

"Discrimination particularly in treating mental illness where there is an issue with drug or alcohol use - reporting that the individual needs to address the drug and alcohol issue prior to engaging services in treatment of the underlying mental illness. Discrimination of the treatment of young people due to the inexperience of staff (overburdened and underfunded) resulting in inadequate treatment being provided. Substance rehabilitation services not being long enough - particularly for youth - as there was an alternative of 1 week or 3 months and hard for a young person to commit to 3 months. Discrimination of parents - as my son was 18 and therefore resulted in me being excluded from his treatment planning. Discrimination of care of younger people - Public mental health services not being adequately resourced resulting in limitations of access, shorter episodes of care and private services being financially inaccessible."

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 don't know what is working well. What can be done better: Having centralised triage and referral services which are interlinked (and communicate with each other) so that you do not need to make multiple contacts in an attempt to gain treatment services. When a family is in distress it is unhelpful to be moved from service to service in an attempt to get help for your child - I don't understand how even a private facility can turn you away with no explanation (they would not turn you away if you were having a heart attack). treatment options other than medication available or medication along with supportive treatments such as working on routines, medication, mindfulness and psychological treatments. Such as a wellness centres - should be available in the cover of private health insurance. "

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

Improvement of the focus of men's mental health particularly regarding their roles as fathers - young men need their fathers around. Young men need purpose - no purpose for those in rural areas and they can become lost in this society. Less alcohol and gambling advertising..

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.

Provided answers this to above. it is not one thing that contributes to the decline in an individual's mental health - it can commence with not being able to get your child into the right school. There needs to be more options for those who struggle in main stream and there needs to be educational opportunities. For example there are no options between VCAL and VCE. Barriers to access of some public schools with opportunities to meet these needs due to zoning. In some

areas a distinct lack of public schools.

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

N/A

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

To be better informed of the treatment that their family members is receiving so you have an awareness of how best to support them and guidance (as some times you don't know how to do this) . Ensuring that you are able to speak to their treating team so you know what is relevant and how to have those conversations. Be provided with adequate support for yourself and not told you need to go and seek treatment for yourself. GP's needs education in managing mental health in particular in supporting family members who are caring for a loved one with mental health problems.

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

"Appropriate working conditions, staffing levels, remuneration and supporting the wellbeing of people working in this area."

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?

It starts with appropriate educational opportunities and then supported traineeships in workplaces - their needs to be alternatives to what is currently available. Young people with mental illness need mentoring opportunities.

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?

"Less private and more public as people with mental illness often don't have the financial capability - yet currently the public system can only providing critical care and not inpatient or day programs like private facilities. There is a distinct lack of private facilities with waiting periods. There should not be a distinction between mental illness and drug and alcohol services - dual diagnosis services are not realistically available. As discussed centralised triage services that include access to public mental health, drug and alcohol services and psycho-social support services so individuals can move between services with ease depending on there recovery needs at any point in time, Emphasis not only on medications - access for young people to a range of services. Easily accessible - that are welcoming and understanding, geographically accessible and able to meet the needs of the individuals (inpatient and better outpatient options and some of them 24 hours) that are therapeutic. Supportive of individuals and their families.. "

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

More mental health hubs being funded. Improve funding to mental health workforce.

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

N/A