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?
"More government funding for awareness and resources for people with mental illnesses. Education for the community - about the conditions and what we can do to help people with these conditions if they're in crisis. Nicer environments within mental health facilities - older wards consumers describe as looking like jails more than hospitals, and their visitors see this and hear their opinions on these environments and perpetuate the stigma. Decriminalising drug use - people with addictions need support and help from services, not prison sentences. Better resources to help staff deal with violence - the media hears about the violence and tells the public, and people are more scared of psych consumers."

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?
Research on ultra high risk people (psychosis) is great. All the early or first episode psychosis programs are excellent and are really helping a lot of people. Public education will help potentially in regards to getting people into treatment earlier.

What is already working well and what can be done better to prevent suicide?
"Education, Reducing stigma Better access to THERAPY. It's so difficult for patients to access good CBT, DBT programs unless they can afford up front private fees (which the average person can't) Teaching people better coping strategies, Acute in patient units managing patients with BPD better. Being able to recognise suicidal consumers better Educating the public on what to do if a friend/neighbour/family member/colleague is suicidal or they think they might be suicidal."

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.
"Access to services. Mental health GP plans need more therapy sessions - 10 is not enough More inpatient mental health beds Upgrades to mental health inpatient facilities - they're old and dangerous. People should not have to share a bed room in an acute psychiatric facility Better access to long term inpatient care - SECUs, CCUs ect Education for carers, consumers, the public on what services are out there for them "

What are the drivers behind some communities in Victoria experiencing poorer mental health outcomes and what needs to be done to address this?
"Limited access to good mental health facilities, Remote areas may not have a psychologist or psychiatry available Education for GPs, as they are often the first port of call Poor coping strategies due to not being taught by parents ect - teach them strategies in their communities (low

socio economic) - mindfulness ect Stress, low finances, inability to find a job - "

What are the needs of family members and carers and what can be done better to support them?
"Support - someone to vent to and lean on when times get tough Coping strategies to deal with their own emotional responses to their loved ones mental illness Education regarding mental illness and the process of recovery, what to look out for in terms of signs of relapse ect Support groups where carers can support other carers Teaching them self care and that they need to look after themselves too otherwise burn out will occur "

What can be done to attract, retain and better support the mental health workforce, including peer support workers?
"Better nurse patient ratios, Pay rise Better working conditions - less violence - address this, validate it, and give funding to reduce it, help the staff feel safer at work, Better ward environments, many of the wards are really old and dangerous - blind corners ect- patients should not have to share a room within an acute inpatient unit. More funding for ward based activities. Education for staff about addictions and disabilities (we don't get taught this but are expected to nurse patients with co-occurring substance abuse problems or disabilities and it's really challenging) More supervision, peer support, and activities to ensure the staff mental health remains intact - staff mindfulness sessions ect "

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?
Access to services - therapy in the community Better community supports for consumers because the inpatient setting can not cope with the amount of consumers requiring an admission Upgrading acute inpatient mental health wards - a lot of them are incredibly old and require immediate attention

What can be done now to prepare for changes to Victorias mental health system and support improvements to last?
"Let everyone know what is happening, Ask staff and consumers what they want Prepare a budget and ask for feedback from staff and consumers "

Is there anything else you would like to share with the Royal Commission?
"Something really needs to change, Mental health needs more funding, it's been chronically underfunded for too many years, which is incredibly upsetting for all effected by mental illness. "