

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

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Name

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

1. Parenting education from perinatal period onwards till adolescence. Parents need more of 'manual' they do not use common sense anymore as they are more stressed. 2. Department of Education needs to back off the curriculum pressure and focus on social emotional only in the early years. More and more kids are not able to cope with school. 3. Department needs to do more in terms of kids that are missing a lot of school or not attending in early and primary years. 4. More intervention for at risk families as Department of Human Services overloaded and need an in-between intervention service that is not voluntary such as Child First.

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?

"Education in early years schooling on self-regulation, psycho-education, coping strategies and mental and physical health. More voluntary check in with parents across the early years to make sure they are coping. Parents educated and make legal plans of how they will co-parent if they separate. I see many parents treating each other terribly and using the kids as pawns in their revenge which is devastating."

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

"Parenting education on self-regulation, coping, emotional intelligence in the primary school years. Parents need to learn how to listen to their kids and tolerate their child's negative emotions. I think what contributes to a young person's thoughts of suicide is that they have not been allowed to express their feelings and parents have rejected their child when they have expressed negative emotions."

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.

We need to be thinking prevention and early intervention. If a parent doesn't have good and physical health it will transfer and impact the child and how they learn and develop. Children can't experience good mental health and physical health if the parent does not provide this environment. It is so much harder to intervene through therapy and services down the track because many professionals are too scared to tell a parent what they are doing that is damaging their child. Also too many professionals focus on diagnosing and medicating issues and make it an external issue rather than an internal issue.

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

The systemic issues such as low levels of education and then low levels of employment put

financial pressures on communities which then contribute to mental health.

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

N/A

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

"Empowerment to be the experts in their role and be honest with people about their maladaptive patterns that are holding them back and causing distress. More training, supervision and pay."

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?

I think there is many things available but often people needing social interaction or a job are just not able or prepared to do things. Disempowerment starts early and if the family a person has grown up in has enabled a child to do nothing and has not valued schooling or employment or responsibility it is very hard to engage people down the track to do something to help themselves. My focus though is early intervention and prevention through working with parents and early years children.

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?

"Perinatal education on parenting and psycho-education for themselves and how to bring up a mentally and physically healthy child. This must be mandatory. This means that we need a huge taskforce of maternal health care workers, perinatal mental health and family workers. Department of Education needs to change curriculum as so many kids cannot cope with school. Department of Human services need another department that does work with at risk families. Child First should be involuntary. We need to stop enabling families to continue in their maladaptive ways. We know have a generation of young people riddled with anxiety and depression at risk of suiciding, drug addiction and criminal behaviour. We have to make huge systemic change that focuses on early years, prevention and early intervention. Currently our focus is on treating and there are some excellent services around but it is too late to make change if the service is voluntary or if the person will not engage."

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

Everything I have previously mentioned needs to be done now....as soon as possible. I think the Government is scared to make changes because it takes so much work and a complete overhaul....nothing will change unless we make changes to systems that focus on prevention and early intervention.

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

I work in a large Government school and see many issues and how these aspects play out in families day to day lives. I believe stigma comes from the individuals own beliefs not a society issue. If we learn about mental health as we do physical health...if we look as health holistically there will be separation of mental health issues as being something that is to be ashamed of. It is

all about education.