

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?

It takes time to change a stigma but I believe it is slowly changing. We should continue to educate through open dialogue and education in schools; encourage and support those with mental illness to share their personal journey; demonstrate that mental illness is prevalent in those without drug and alcohol dependence and that the two don't always go hand in hand. Importantly treat mental illness as we would physical illness.

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 do not know how to prevent mental illness. More research is required. Early treatment needs to be instigated by a parent so parents need to be aware of when to seek support for their child. Increase access to quality school psychologists in both primary and secondary schools. When support is sought it MUST be received. When resources are available we have found hospital support in times of crisis to be helpful. However, we have left emergency rooms due to lack of support. Convincing someone to wait for 4 hours is really difficult, especially when after they seek treatment there is no change to condition and they are sent home. The person with the mental illness and their carers have to have faith and confidence in the help they are seeking. Medicare funding needs to be extended to a minimum of 12 sessions a year. My daughter requires weekly psychology sessions during times of crisis which then extend to fortnightly, then monthly sessions. This is well above what Medicare covers. If she was living on her own and responsible for her own costs she would not attend as she couldn't afford to pay. "

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

"Beyond Blue and other similar online sites are a positive and have provided myself and my daughter with useful information. I worry about sites such as Tumblr as that took my daughter into some dark places. I was recently at a metropolitan hospital as my daughter was suicidal. We sat in the waiting room for 4 hours as we watched people with sprained ankles attended to before us, even though we arrived first. The reason cited to us was that there was only one psychologist on the duty which was inadequate given the potential outcome of the two scenarios. "

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.

"Develop a program for primary school children which they can access outside of school. It needs to teach them about social connections and how to maintain lasting friendships. As a parent and a primary teacher, my experience indicates that good social connections increases the chance of good mental health. Some children develop these social skills naturally, whilst others need far

more direction and support than what can be achieved at school under the direction of teachers. "

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?

I need an indication that my daughter can be helped. After speaking to professionals I walk away feeling that no one knows why my daughter has mental health issues and no one knows how to cure condition. I get told how to manage situations but I want the condition gone! Access to a specialist who actually has the skills required to assist. I feel psychologists are not confident in the treatment plans they offer and psychiatrists lack the compassion needed to deal with parents. Access and funding to psychologist for siblings. Follow through with the offer of mental health assistance of carers. It is emotionally draining attending to the needs of someone with a mental health issue that you live with.

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?

Accessible assistance with securing a job that understands and is sympathetic to the cyclical nature of depression and other mental illnesses. I am concerned about what will happen to my daughter when my husband and I can no longer support and care for her?????

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?

". increase medicare funding for psychology and kinesiology. more psychs on duty in ERs. greater research into cause, prevention and cure. more information on long stay facilities (before a family needs to select one in a crisis situation). more short term stay facilities available. eliminate repeated referrals from GP to see ongoing psychologists. . better communication between treating psychologist and psychiatrist "

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?

Financial cost of supporting someone with a mental health issue is ongoing. Costs include:. loss of wages for carer. ongoing psychology bills. psychiatrist bills. GP bills. increase cost of private health insurance to include top level hospital. Without this we would have had a bill in the tens of thousands. . medication Never underestimate the emotional cost!