

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?

"More campaigns that highlight the diversity of people who it affects, with real stories to help give insight. Giving people without mental illness better resources to reach out to people with mental health. More visible services in nicer facilities. "

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?

"The headspace campaigns with young people sharing their stories was very good. Training GPs to ask more questions about mental health and have more non-acute services available (e.g. support groups/centres with a focus on maintaining wellbeing and life skills development. The school of life runs a lot of courses I would be interested in, but they are prohibitive in price and location."

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

No idea.

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.

"Our communities are more fragmented, so there are less places for people to connect and feel supported. The set-up of more community centres with better quality events and facilities for all socio-economic groups, tailored programs for people of all ages (there seems to be a gap in social support for people aged 25-60)."

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

"Poverty and family violence are huge problems. The government needs to help address this through providing affordable and safe housing, and increasing the minimum wage/centrelink provisions. We are a wealthy country, and no-one deserves to live in poverty."

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

"Family members need more support to provide care for themselves as well as their loved ones. The burden of care is high, and this needs to be acknowledged more widely."

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

"More emotional support for mental health employees e.g. access to counselling, professional

supervision and training. Better staff to patient ratios to reduce stress on nursing staff. "

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?

"People living with mental illness need support to live happier and more social lives. By reducing shame and stigma associated with mental illness, better social connections may be more possible, resulting in healthier and more productive lives. Loneliness is a major issue for all ages, so perhaps a ""connections cafe"" in each regional centre that is staffed by counsellors that promotes social connection with regular workshops could be something that's helpful. "

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 are a lack of psychological services available. The provision of more individual and group psychological/counselling services would help a lot, as 10 sessions for someone living with an ongoing mental health condition is not enough. There is a gap in the system between acute patients and community patients, and private GPs have little knowledge of services available outside of the 10 medicare rebated sessions."

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

"Listen to ideas, listen to consumers, and act on these. Recognise that mental health does not exist in isolation - it is affected by our financial security, our safety and our infrastructure. "

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

"I feel that I have experienced the mental health system from all sides, as a personal consumer, as a carer [REDACTED], and as an employed allied health professional in public psychiatric hospitals."