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

Name
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What are your suggestions to improve the Victorian communitys understanding of mental illness and reduce stigma and discrimination?
"We need to campaign that it's OK to not be OK. We did the R you OK?' Campaign which supports the idea of asking a friend if they are OK. We also need to allow people to not feel OK, that at certain times in our lives we can't always be on our 100% A game. It's OK to not feel like doing anything and take away the pressure to always perform. We are bombarded by people telling us to live our best life and for most that translates into a unrealistic view on how their life should be. They need to be awesome everyday otherwise they've failed their day. We should also encourage mental health days in the workforce. Take away the stigma of having to chuck a sickie but instead allow people to feel confident enough and say to their employer that they need a mental health day. This would then alert the employer that the pressure is too much for said employee whilst giving both of them time to gather their thoughts and come up with an action plan "

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 love that we have a mental health care plan. I would love to see this fully subsidised. We need to as a country be better at supporting more work life balance. Our economy is in such a state that we are one of the most expensive places to live which means our citizens are working so hard just to make ends meet. You want a place where people enjoy their downtime and are happy to go into work. I have two kids and both husband and I need to work full time. This means we don't get home until after 6.30pm and our downtime on the weekend is consumed by weekly chores. Having no work life balance and no flexibility in the workforce leads to very poor social and mental outcomes

What is already working well and what can be done better to prevent suicide?
Not sure what is currently being done. Feels like it's handled after the fact when people are in hospital after an attempted suicide

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.
I think it's a cost thing. It's the stigma around having a mental health issue. We need to make doctors appointments free so we can get a referral and also the mental health care plan needs to be free. The upper allowance is still only half of the consultation fee

What are the drivers behind some communities in Victoria experiencing poorer mental health outcomes and what needs to be done to address this?
As a mum I see the lack of parenting being the first point where mental health starts to decline. We need to push for more family values and care in the home environment to create a safe space for

children to feel supported. This needs to be pushed through social media and advertising as I feel some people really only know how to be parents from their own experiences. It's basic things like.. Spending time with your kids Playing outside Looking them in the eye and helping them feel safe Having family dinners/meals Talking about health and fitness Cooking good nutritious food Teaching kids that the world is made up of different people but inside we are all the same

What are the needs of family members and carers and what can be done better to support them?
They need to be armed with information on how to handle their patient and not trigger them. More support and information needs to be available

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?
We can make our communal spaces more about community living. Have these spaces turned into veggie gardens and encourage farmers markets so that we develop small communities which share and connect with one another. This creates an opportunity to engage with neighbors and also get outdoors and participate in something local

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?
"Making healthcare affordable and fair for every citizen. For a country which is so highly taxes, healthcare should be free of charge for everyone"

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?
N/A