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

SUB. 0002.0023.0089

What are your suggestions to improve the Victorian communitys understanding of mental illness and reduce stigma and discrimination?
N/A

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?
"My son, who suffers from PTSD and has cerebral palsy, accesses group activities provided by MIND. Because of the effects of his c.p., I accompany him to some of the group activities. This has enabled me to see what a great benefit they are to him (and to other participants). He is occasionally able to access mainstream community activities now following a few years of MIND-provided group activities. I have watched others also struggling with mental health issues and he accommodate episodes of acute anxiety in the group setting, and have seen growth in his capacity to manage anxious behaviours in groups. I have also watched a group activity lift his spirits; his disabilities are emotionally challenging as well.   It is not usual for a family member to attend such groups, and, if my son did not have cerebral palsy, I wouldn't be. However, attending some groups has really helped me to understand the impact of a mental illness on very different individuals. I understand my son better as a consequence. I'm grateful that MIND has never made me feel unwelcome. I fear that group activities for people with mental illness are at threat under the NDIS. Some who used to attend local groups have dropped out. They didn't receive an NDIS 'package'. I really hope that group supports can be recognised for the important role they play in helping a person move back into the community. In our rural area, many groups are very small (not just those run for people with mental illnesses). I worry that what might be determined as a minimum 'viable' size in a metropolitan area might not be appropriate in a rural area."

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

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.
N/A

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?
"Mental illness is difficult to understand. We can not reason to it, even if we understand its causes.

I've found that meeting friends of my son who experience mental illness has helped. I have also attended workshops run by MIND that are intended for people with mental illness; these have given me a lot of very useful information."

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?
"I think opportunities to begin to mix in supportive groups will improve social participation generally. Small, 'safe' groups need to be supported to help people to gain the confidence to transition to participation in the broader community,"

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?
N/A

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?
An area of concern to me is the mental health workforce in rural areas. My son's psychiatrist is 135km from home.