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

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

"Greater knowledge, understanding, respect of mental health issues and integration in workplaces that deal with family/child welfare. Perhaps people working in public health areas such as mental health, drugs and alcohol and child protection should collaborate more, integrate information where possible on a private system that allows all parties to share sensitive information so that best practice may occur. This may give all parties better understanding of global family issues and therefore reduce discriminatory and stigmatising behaviour. For example if child protection was privy to mental health information of a parent and was able to communicate collaboratively for an outcome -instead of being a ""them against us"" type of situation .   "

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?

"Workplaces are ""talking the talk"" about mental health now which is great. I have noticed that there is much greater support systems and talk/education about self-care and seeking supports at work that are more accessible but when it comes down to ""walking the walk"", the work environment, time constraints and expectations of everyday life at work for those who are have less control over their work schedule can find it very difficult to find the time for balance and to seek help early when needed. "

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

"Again, more talk and awareness is great for the general public to help those family members who have lost a loved one to suicide; awareness has made it easier for people to grieve the loss of a loved one as they can now tell others more openly without fear of stigma etc.   But I don't see that the system is working for those who seek to commit or actually commit suicide. We are under resourced for the magnitude of this problem. Clients with issues who seek help at hospitals etc are assessed very briefly and then turned away with little support or follow up and often commit suicide. Why do they get to this point is what we really need to focus on: It is a bottom up solution. There is not enough attention to the breakdown issues of our society: As a society, our human compassion, decency and respect has been eaten away gradually from the ground up. We need to address early childhood and family issues that help from the bottom up. Children need to see a purpose in life, be given support/love and to be taught resilient coping skills"

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.

"'-turning up to mental health hospitals, being given a brief assessment and then being turned away without any follow up supports -seeking mental health help but receiving incorrect diagnosis and drugs that hurt rather than help turns people off coming back for help -Cost -The longevity of

recovery when you are needing to work or look after children   "

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

"'-Drugs and the effects they have on mental health directly on the brain and indirectly through disruption to functioning and interpersonal abilities -Poor community services and supports -lack of health awareness/education. For instance, people think it is the norm to drink in excess of 2 drinks per day -lack of direction and goal making perhaps due to less opportunities, low socioeconomic status causes -high stresses due to low socioeconomic status and perceived pressures -low self-esteem and self worth often because the tools to achieve these are not available such as skills for a meaningful job -Our ""want it now"" society teaches us-including our children that we don't need to practise self discipline. Self-discipline practise leads to less impulsive behaviour, gives meaning to effort and reward and therefore enables goal setting and achievement; we need to change the ""want it now"" mentality to achieve better wellbeing and mental health in society.   "

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

"When you have a loved one who is mentally ill and so anxious and depressed that they can't make good decisions but will not listen to advice, it is extremely frustrating and distressing. ██████████ etc is good but often when it is a concerned family member there seems to be little advice given. When a family member has no idea about how to navigate the system when there is a loved one that they are worried about there should be phone advice at ██████████ etc that directs you to a ""case manager"" type situation where you can make a one off appointment to spend quality time in discussion about the problem and how to support. Too often, families have no idea how to help and where to find it. "

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

"A better pay scale and continuous professional development; less stigma; support from the government where policies match best research on current problems eg. changes in alcohol policies, changes in criminal approaches when mental health and drugs are involved; better conditions and support that is obtainable for staff-self reflection and self care is talked about but needs to be put into place better "

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?

N/A

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?

"'-Navigation of the social systems that usually intersect with mental health clients, including: mental health, drugs and alcohol, child protection, forensic, housing etc- there needs to be better case management support for vulnerable people who are facing charges, mentally ill, using drugs and alcohol to cope and have little ability to help themsleves though this messy and complex system. -More integration and access to information for workers regarding medical, mental and social issues. There needs to be confidential but open access to information so that professionals

know the bigger picture.   "

What can be done now to prepare for changes to Victorias mental health system and support improvements to last?
'-start in the early child hood years/prenatal to change the roll on intergenerational effects

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