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?
"we can start by improving awareness. living with mental illness, i have found that my alot of my friends were not able to support me due to the belief that ""there is no such thing as mental illness"" or symptom can be ""get over it"" i found that many people still see mental illness as not an illness at all. i would like that to change. i would also ideally like for everyone to understand the physical symptoms of mental illness such as being stuck in bed, or that some people experience so much stress that the body starts attacking itself and becomes ran down"

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?
"when i was first looking for help, i was in much need of a residential support, i didn't fit into the eligibility criteria for hospital or rehab. at this time, therapy was not helping. in the end i didn't reecieve the help i needed, i ended up having a complete melt down and lost my job. i think that there could have been some more preventative measures before it got too bad"

What is already working well and what can be done better to prevent suicide?
"i really appreciate the help line numbers advertised after speaking about suicide on things like TV, radio etc. it allows people to be informed about suicide, helps people to know they are not alone and where to get help. the misconception of self harm and suicide is a ""cry for help"" i also believe that awareness needs to be made around the difference between self harm and suicide attempt."

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.
"for me personally, i found that societies expectations made it (and still is) hard to experience good mental health. i struggle with working full time, which has kept me living in poverty. not having enough money to do things that basic humans need such as socialising, nutrition, work life balance has severely impacted my mental health and has made it that extra bit harder in my recovery. i also found that there are only certain types of therapy are available under the public healthcare system such as cbt. i don't find that cbt has been helpful. i have wanted to try some alternative therapy, ie:hypnotherrapy. however, i cannot afford this not working full time. neither NDIS or Medicare cover for alternative therapies. "

What are the drivers behind some communities in Victoria experiencing poorer mental health outcomes and what needs to be done to address this?
"being from a poorer community, these are my concerns and also were some of my barriers growing up- - being surrounded by people from poorer families, its hard to get away and change

lifestylle - new generations are learning bad habits from the community area. for example, growing up in broadmeadows, not all were working families, there was alot of drug use..it is considered ""a norm"" thereforyound peopole are following suit. - poor education and expectations from young people in areas with poverty"

What are the needs of family members and carers and what can be done better to support them?
"RESPITE !!! ███████ is the carer of her grandchildren due to drug use from the parents. i havee found that she could use more assistance on coping with the drug users. i have found that she is also in need of some basic house cleaning. trying to juggle everything already, i have found that the houshold chores make it more overwhelming. for a simple thing of having a cleaner to go there once a week/ or once a fortnight even would make the would of difference for her and the children "

What can be done to attract, retain and better support the mental health workforce, including peer support workers?
i love peer support workers. i have found that they have been more relateable to myself because they are allowed to be more vulnerable themseelves

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?
support groups are great. some local business have initiatives for people experiencing poor mental health. i think thats great

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?
"payment for people experiencing poor mental health. after being too unwell to work (doctors medical certificate provided) i have been on newstart for the past 2 years. Newstart is not a big payment and i have had barely enough to survive over the time. i havent had access to basic needs such as a proper diet and was even homeless at one stage becuase of my lack of funds. i applied for a disability payment which was declined because my state wasnt going to be ""forever"" 2 years is a long time to be unwell with not enough money to support a basic life let alone one thats in recovery. i believe that this is a big grey area. i wasnt working because i was not well enough to work. there needs to be a payment for such people in similar situations"

What can be done now to prepare for changes to Victorias mental health system and support improvements to last?
AWARENESS access to a wider range of therapies. bridging the gap so that people with poorer backgrounds can recieve the same therapies and treatment than those from wealthier back grounds.

Is there anything else you would like to share with the Royal Commission?
"it is a known fact that in poorer communites there is poorer mental health. so why are these people restricted to only certain types of therapies? everyones mental health needs to be looked at and treated holistically. if we continue to do what is best for ""most"" things will never improve. everyone is different, therefor treatment is different,   money, treatment, access, fair go, equality,

equity is all limited for people who experiance poor mental health. improve on these and i believe peoples mental health will improve also. thank you for your time"