

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?

"Teach empathy and provide guidance because often people do not know what to say or do to help someone. Stop court and public officials treating people with disrespect. Stop courts damaging children. Often ex partners who are abusive use any diagnosis of a mental health condition of their ex-partner as a weapon. Recognising a person who treats others with lack of empathy shows they are indeed the perpetrator. A normal person would show empathy and compassion regardless of whether it is an ex-partner or not. When a mother suffers trauma from family violence, she is then treated like a second class citizen and it goes against her and is USED against her. "

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?

"Not much is working well. We need to rewind and look at the impact of society pressures on parents and how they are raising their children as a result. Forced unlawful vaccinations (unlawful, as The Commonwealth of Australia Constitution UK 1901 is what we are supposed to be following for our rights, currently the gov is acting unlawfully), increased hours at work, very little community support, abuse, family violence all have an impact on children who then grow up with mental health issues. If you think a child does not suffer because their mother suffers then that is where the work needs to be done. It is a personal choice to seek support. Often, those that are providing services (psychologists, etc) are not trained in mental health and trauma including domestic violence so their advice is unhelpful. We need to recognise that the 'dialogue' style methods don't work for mental health. We need to recognise that alternative forms of healing get better results and long term results. Trauma therapy, kinesiology, quantum healing are all life saving and yet these types of modalities are treated like 'hippy' treatments and not given the recognition they deserve. The court system is causing mental health issues because magistrates have no idea what they are doing, they yell at parents (I have witnessed this for parents going before me at court), hand children over to their abusive parent and then everyone wonders why we have mental health problems in the up and coming generations."

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

"We are an over-medicated, over worked society living under a dictatorship. The impact of lack of freedom (including the punitive punishment system used in schools), over sexualising our children in schools and a system that does not listen when children are crying for help is what is contributing to suicide. Kids become detached from their parents when connection should be encouraged. So many kids are also alienated from one parent by the other parent with NO good reason and as a result, the parent commits suicide, or the children do. It is so so sad. Kids need mentors they can trust. Military need support for trauma including healing modalities, those crying out for help need to be listened to and taken seriously - not locked up or sent away. I heard a

story the other day of a mother who had been alienated from her children by her ex, she told the police she wanted them to help her get her children back or she would kill herself. What did they do? Took her to the station and locked her up overnight. Is THAT what we do to mothers suffering grief from not seeing their kids?? This type of thing is going on all the time. The other night, my ex coerced my 12 year old out of the house while I was out picking up his sister from school, because according to my ex, I was not providing the level of care that 'suited him' while my son was home sick. He literally kidnapped him from my house and didn't even bother to tell me he had taken him. Can you imagine what that does to a mother and then the message it sends to the child when no-one does anything? It instills mis-trust and damaged the mother-child bond. The federal police said they couldn't do anything. The local police sent me home with a similar message and child protection did not deem it serious enough to act. Perpetrators are getting away with type of behaviour and we are left to deal with the aftermath. After living family violence for almost 10 years, I am fortunate I am strong but many who have been through what I have and been treated the way I have by courts and therapists would not survive it. Psychological violence is NOT being recognised and NOT being acted upon. It is all talk and no action."

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.

"We need to start from the ground up. Stop over-testing and over-assessing our kids in schools. They have way too much pressure on them. Learning is no longer fun but a chore. Education under our Constitution should be free. Stop charging parents in public schools. There is a lot to be said for handwriting and yet everything is becoming online. Writing is becoming a lost art. Make community sports free to join for school-aged kids. Extra-curricular is now out of reach of single parent families due to cost and erodes sense of community. Stop forced vaccinations - they are damaging mental health and it is causing division in the community. The gov should be ashamed of what this whole thing has done to community. It's a new form of 'racism'. Stop developers building small places with no backyards. We need room to grow our own food and teach our kids good wholesome skills. There is too much pressure on single parents to work and this impact on family time. There are many services out there but very few understand the complexities of mental health and especially when it comes to domestic violence. Further, there are too many services that just sit there and listen and are unable to do anything else. Many of the services are not helpful. The whole provision of services and what they do, needs to be reviewed. Services are failing families. Child protection is not working in the interest of children in many cases and seem to lack understanding of the behaviour of abusers."

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

"War veterans need access to healing modalities and these need to be recognised as paths back to normality and to reduce mental health. Support them, don't ostracize them. Australia's domestic and family violence stats are a disgrace. The impact of FV on families and especially children is devastating. We need people who understand how complex this is and we need police to be in a role of peace keepers and not policy enforcers. The police are no longer helpful but running under a corporation, and not swearing their oath to the rightful crown. Alternative therapies are treated like witchcraft and yet a holistic approach is extremely effective in treating mental health along with other therapies such as art therapy, music therapy, dancing, etc. People need to be encouraged to partake in things that bring them a sense of joy. Aside from that I am unsure. This was not a

clear question. "

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

"Family members should be encouraged to be involved in group therapy and educated on what is helpful for those suffering mental health. Part of the issue though is that families are dysfunctional so often other family members are not capable of supporting. If we are talking about family members in terms of a single parent and children, then providing outreach can help helpful. Sometimes siblings suffer seeing the impact of one parent's actions on the other. An abusive parent causes a fracture in sibling relationships. So, siblings need support but often don't want to accept support because of fear of the abusive parent. Parental alienation from divorce is having a terrible impact on family members. The alienated child misses out on life events with the other side of the family. This is being recognised by Karen Woodall in the UK but here in Australia, only a few are real experts in PA...such as [REDACTED] I cannot comment on carers. N/A."

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

Not all great mental health workers have a certificate on the wall. Having a qualification means very little in the real world. Those suffering from mental health should be educating workers so they have a better understanding of mental health. More case studies would be helpful. The system is overworked and overloaded. I don't have an answer to that.

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?

no idea

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?

"family court!!!! Perpetrators to be held accountable. FV in Australia is a disgrace. Bring back our Chapter 3 courts - not these one judge star chambers that pass incorrect judgements on people. STOP the court corruption. STOP police corruption. Victims need support, empathy, services to take action on their behalf. Financial support needs to be provided - this is way too limited."

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

"Speak to those who have a mental health condition as a result of what they have lived. They can share what they find difficult and what they would find helpful. That means START LISTENING and ACTING on those words. I hold little faith in the mental health system and the courts have failed us as a family. My children have suffered greatly from a system that has belittled me, given my ex partner the perpetrator power and refuses to act when I have reached out. We find, we are left to ourselves to get on the best way we can and that is simply not good enough. [REDACTED] let us down. Child protection let us down. The courts let us down. So you tell me, what is left???? We continue to live with abuse and there's not a darn thing I can do about it. After nearly 10 years since ending my marriage, we have lived with abuse and if the system supports the abuser, you are going to find mental health becomes an issue for both a mother and her children. I do not fully

know how the system needs to be fixed but it does. "

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

"It's time for change. Families like mine are not an isolated case. We are not dead, we do not get death threats but we suffer at the hands of an abuser and not a service in sight that is taking action on our behalf to help us. We are here to tell you about our lived experience. Now, it's whether we are heard and change is made. Otherwise, you can expect more mental health issues and for it to be intergenerational unless the cycle is broken. We should not have to deal with this on our own but all the doors are closed. There is not a service out there that I have confidence in and there is not a court of competent jurisdiction that I can turn to for REAL justice. It's a disgrace. How ironic, I just read your privacy statement which takes away the rights of people and gives you right to do whatever you want and send it to whoever you want....there's a good place to start with mental health. ...Where the Royal Commission has concerns for the health or safety of any person in connection with information it receives, the Royal Commission may report those concerns and/or provide information to other parties, authorities, Government departments or agencies such as emergency and health services. I do not agree with your privacy statement. I have a right to have my say and NOT be restricted by what you feel you can do with my information. MY privacy statement is that I give you permission to share my information in hope that it will improve the mental health system, you can make it public because it is my truth of what we have lived and what I believe needs to change. Aside from that, I do not contract with you. I am providing you with information of my own good will. While I am forced to click on your button to agree to your privacy statement, I am doing it under duress and because you do not provide any other option. Such dictatorial actions forced upon us are part of the reason why we have mental health issues in this country. "