

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

Organisation Name

N/A

Name

Dr Esther Chin

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

Raise awareness of how people who live with mental illness contribute to the Victorian community.

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?

Australia is the global leader in the Research and Development of mental health technological solutions. The Australian government has an eMental Health strategy. Universal access to a stepped care digital mental health ecosystem is facilitated by the Head to Health portal and the MindSpot clinic. The Synergy Online System is an example of Software as a Medical Device that is undergoing clinical trials in preparation for inclusion in the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods. The mental health workforce's capacity to integrate digital resources into clinical practice is supported by the Black Dog Institute's E-Mental Health in Practice suite of resources. Mindframe and #chatsafe training and consensus guidelines offer information and encouragement on how stakeholders can communicate safely and ethically about mental ill-health using various media (including social media). It is essential to roll out and integrate these existing technological solutions across Victoria.

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

"Suicide prevention campaigns towards bystander awareness and behaviour change have a high profile in the media and in public awareness; however, suicide prevention continues to be perceived as the scope of practice of mental health clinicians. All health professionals should be trained in, and expected to provide, basic psychological counselling as part of their scope of practice. Lifeline has developed an accredited program of extensive training and supervision that could be extended beyond Lifeline call centres. The Mindframe and #chatsafe training and consensus guidelines on the ethical communication of suicide-related content should form the basis of ongoing accreditation for professionals working in media, communication, technology, and with young people."

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.

"Good mental health requires nutrition, rest, hygiene, exercise, stability, and work. As most Australians live in share housing, it is reasonable to expect public accommodation to be share housing. Public accommodation could provide universal access to a permanent address (in partnership with Australia Post) as well as showering and laundry facilities (in partnership with water companies) that can be digitally booked in advance to reduce wait times. Building low-cost housing and community facilities in regional and rural centres is a cost-effective way to supply housing, reduce population pressure on urban resources, and equitably invest in communities

across Victoria. Tax deductions could be given to households for opening their homes to people in need as part of AirBnB Open Homes. It should be mandatory for corporates in the supermarket and grocery industry to divert unsold produce from waste to centres that provide low-cost community meals."

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

"Fast, reliable Internet must be rolled out across Victoria so that every Victorian can access digital mental health services."

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

N/A

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

"Working as a sole practitioner in private practice greatly limits a clinician's capacity to treat complex mental health conditions. Clinicians should be required to work regularly in public mental health and in multidisciplinary teams, to maintain ongoing accreditation. Clinicians should also be recognised for choosing to work and specialise in areas of skill shortage (e.g. remote mental health, Borderline Personality Disorder)."

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?

"Education is increasingly available and accessible. A university-designed course on Coursera costs just \$69. The Victorian government in partnership with local councils should develop a register of people who are Not in Employment, Education, or Training, and match these people with the educational and economic opportunities offered by community centres, educational organisations, social enterprises, and organisations that have a large volunteer base. Tax revenue can be used to directly employ people who would otherwise be unemployed."

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?

"Universal access to mental health resources. An integrated Victorian mental health system, with no duplication in services. A legal limit on wait times for services. A population-wide roll out of formal, accredited training and supervision in mental health literacy, support, and care for all students, community stakeholders, health professionals, and professionals engaged in any interpersonal work."

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

"When campaigning for donations/funding or announcing a funding commitment, conduct a standard economic analysis and communicate the results of this analysis so that the community can understand how budget figures have been calculated. Measure and monitor the mental health outcomes of clinical services, local government areas, educational organisations, workplaces, and

any recipient of mental health-related funding. Publicise data in real-time."

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

"The Royal Commission was an unnecessary waste of resources. There are extensive research, communications, and submissions already available on the Victorian mental health system. Please keep your promise to implement all the recommendations.

See <https://anzmh.asn.au/2019/07/08/mental-health-australia/>"