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

Organisation Name
N/A

Name
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What are your suggestions to improve the Victorian communitys understanding of mental illness and reduce stigma and discrimination?
I feel that the only way people will understand mental illness is if they experience it first hand through their own illness or through looking after a loved one with it. I believe that allowing people to tell their stories and having that reach a wider community where the opportunity for judgement and prejudice is limited may help others understand or at least begin to comprehend.

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?
"Keeping focus on prevention and support services for domestic violence and abuse (of any kind) victims. Mental illness may stem from abuse and exposure to violence in the home and by providing better counselling services, support services and abilities to pursue prosecution, I feel that the mental health of communities could be impacted."

What is already working well and what can be done better to prevent suicide?
"Make more acute services available for those who need them and make them available at short notice as well as appropriate for different patient types. I recently had a time where I became severely suicidal and felt that I couldn't do anything because if I called an ambulance or presented to my local hospital, the fear of being institutionalised in an ill-equipped facilities that does not cater to the individual needs of the patient was too strong for me and I would have preferred to suffer silently at home than let that happen, which I think is disgusting and completely wrong. It should not be up to my family and close friends to support me through my most intense periods of feeling like I want to die because I fear inadequate services so much."

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.
"Money is a massive barrier as well as the need to travel from regional areas to the metropolitan suburbs, and also the wait list barriers. I am lucky my psychiatric visits with a private psychiatrist are covered by TAC but my brother has to pay upfront each visit with his own private psychiatrist. The need to travel to the city from rural areas for psychiatric help can be difficult for those who dont drive and must access public transport, as well as those in low socio-economic standing. A person I know was on a wait list to see a private psychiatrist for 10 months and still did not get a call back despite calling to check where they were on the wait list, and they were desperately in need so thought it best to bypass the public system and get immediate help."

What are the drivers behind some communities in Victoria experiencing poorer mental health outcomes and what needs to be done to address this?
"Domestic violence, abuse, drug and alcohol abuse, lack of awareness/stigma attached to mental

illness, lack of access to services due to money problems or living rurally. The only way to address these is to recognise them, develop plans for how to attack the issues and throw funding into it."

What are the needs of family members and carers and what can be done better to support them?
I am not sure what the needs are but my mum has to care for both of her children who have complex mental health needs and the money constraints for paying for the psychiatric care for both of us can affect what bills sometimes get paid and what bills have extensions made for them just so we can get food on the table. Thankfully I have my own income and can help where needed but it should not be like this.

What can be done to attract, retain and better support the mental health workforce, including peer support workers?
"Decent pay for the work being done, mental health support for the workers, personal development to help them learn how to deal with the requirements of their jobs and adequate leave available."

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?
"Better funding for areas that need it, better services available for those in crisis that does not make them feel like they are a nuisance or a problem, better ways to help those unable to afford care, better care and support for mental health workers, safer environments for patients and staff."

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?
N/A