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

Organisation Name

N/A

Name

Ms Vrinda Edan

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

"I support Janet Meaghers comment that Stigma is a weasel word. Stigma is used to hide discrimination, in many years of teaching about consumer perspectives i have never had a person accurately define or provide examples of stigma in mental health. The best example of programs to reduce discrimination is the NZ 'Like Minds, Like mine" program from the early 2000's. people telling stories of their own experiences alone does not reduce discrimination, showing people as part of the community before identifying that they have mental health challenges can and does."

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?

There is very little that is working well. The	he public and government has	well and truly had the
wool pulled over their eyes by	and the	. there is very
little evidence that people having used the	ese services avoid adult menta	l health services at a
greater rate than people who dont.		

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

"One of the first things we need to accept is that we will never be able to prevent all suicides, particularly with a mental health system that is focused on mental health challenges being a health issue rather than response to trauma, adversity and oppression. we should instead be talking about alternative supports such as the Alternatives to suicide approach: http://www.westernmassrlc.org/alternatives-to-suicide "

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.

"What makes it hard: Oppression, discrimination, trauma, adversity, state sanctioned violence (ie the Mental Health Act) What can be done: repeal the mental health act; provide peer led services in the community; abolish inpatient mental health units and provide peer run alternatives such as piri pono in Aukland, Soteria Houses (UK and USA) and the Leeds Crisis centre (UK)"

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

see above

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

"If you provided better care to consumers, less support will be needed by families and carers. the so called 'burden of care' only exists because of neo liberal policy that has reduced services and

forced families and carers to provide more support. Victorian and Federal government policy clearly positions families and carers as a cheap labour force, a resource to be used and exploited and in many instances to be used to provide evidence of the need for compulsory treatment and detention of individuals "

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

"In regards to peer support workers, more peer led services is vital. It is incredibly dangerous as a peer working in clinical services. there is a growing body of evidence of the extreme levels of discrimination, disrespect and bullying of consumer workers in clinical workplaces. in the past this has been less so in community organisations but the NDIS is increasingly making it difficult for peer workers to retain their different ways of working with people. Clinical supervision for all workforce is vital and all clinical professions should be supported to have supervision from a consumer perspective. I also believe that if workplaces were encouraged more to not use coercion and compulsion with consumers there would also be an improved work environment for staff. there is good evidence of this in services such as safewards and star wards."

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?

"develop Peer led services, address the significant issue of discrimination starting in Mental Health and health services. Stop listening only to people who put themselves forward as experts and start listening to the real experts, people in distress."

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? "develop Peer led services, develop Peer led services, Peer led services invest in community services invest in trauma informed services"

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

"repeal the mental health act, this would force a significant shift in service culture and the experiences of people in distress."

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

I am deeply disturbed by the process of the Commission. the failure to speak to experienced consumer workers and thinkers indicates a significant lack of understanding of the real problems with the system and tells me that the government and the commission has little incentive to actually significantly move aware from the current system that hurts people across the community.