

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

Organisation Name

N/A

Name

Mrs Sarah Kisilevich

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

"I feel strongly that addressing educational practices that are counter to evidence in supporting mental health in children should be used as a starting point to increasing understanding and reducing discrimination. Stressful learning environments, intensive, non-crucial testing and limited play time should all be considered risks to the mental health of children because they alienate children from teachers who really can (and many do!) provide children with invaluable support that may not be available from home. I believe strongly that textbook education is a prime-goal of an ancient educational system and today we need to be catering to the mental and social health of children before we even consider looking at test scores. "

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?

"I feel that the high cost and difficulty in obtaining referrals to mental health care are holding a lot of people back from accessing the help that they desperately need. When people are weighing their mental health against being able to afford rent or food it becomes very difficult to choose to reach out. I believe that there should be a level of mental health care (councillors, social workers) that are readily available under full Medicare bulk-billing at any time, without referrals as an easy starting point for people needing mental health support. "

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

I have limited knowledge on this matter but I am deeply grateful for the Medicare subsidies on medication which have directly affected suicidal thoughts for a close family member.

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.

"In my personal experience, I have noticed that financial stress is a main cause of anxiety and depression and I feel that the struggle of wanting to remain within your support community but knowing that you'll never be able to afford a house, knowing that childcare and education will always be taking the bulk of your finances makes it hard to prioritise mental health treatment. Going to a doctor and getting a referral to mental health support that you can't afford is a terrifying prospect, one that may be keeping people away from getting it. "

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

N/A

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

them?

"It's been challenging separating mental health issues with inappropriate domestic behaviours and while there are wonderful domestic violence support organisations, I do wish that there were a system in place where people can safely discuss concerns without fear of child protection or police involvement based off of a potential issue. It feels very scary to ask for help when you don't know if you're going to get help or make things worse. "

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

N/A

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 Victoria's mental health system should ideally look like, tell us what areas and reform ideas you would like the Royal Commission to prioritise for change?

"Free mental health care. No referrals, no questions, just an easy way to access help whenever you're ready. "

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

"Educate the public on the different types of people in the mental health workforce, their specialities and how to easily locate them. "

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

I'd just like to thank you for tackling this challenging topic and prioritising change in this area.