

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

## **Organisation Name**

N/A

## **Name**

Mr Victor Perton

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

"To increase the focus on optimism and optimistic messaging and to increase the reach and influence of positive psychology. I returned to Australia after living abroad and was astonished by the level of negativity which pervades public discourse and the media. I created the Australian Leadership Project and we have interviewed over 2400 people on the qualities of Australian Leadership. While we asked open questions and there are many qualities suggested, the three central traits of good Australian Leadership are egalitarianism, self-effacing humour and NO-BS plain speaking. If these are the traits, there are millions of people leading well. So why the negativity in one of the most prosperous countries on earth? My Eureka moment came during the 2017 Global Integrity Summit: We are living in a fog of pessimism. Since then I have interviewed thousands of people from Presidents to Indian ditch diggers asking one question, What makes you optimistic? I run workshops on optimistic leadership in prison, corporates and global conferences. We need to help people find the source of their own optimism. The evidence from Brookings, Harvard and many other bodies show that optimism is a key to longevity, a key protector against heart-disease and cancer and the underpinning of innovation, creativity and innovation. In Australia it is much undervalued. "

### **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?**

"According to research, we have the second highest level of anti-depressant medication in the world. We have rising rates of suicide and depression. I can't say what is working. What is working against us is a news media which is incredibly negative and pessimistic causing people to misunderstand the world and nation in which they live."

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

"On the face of it, the hundreds of millions we are spending in this space isn't doing much. What I have seen is schools running wellbeing programs and resilience programs but they are countered by the bleak curriculum and materials. Exaggerated hysteria about climate change causes children to be pessimistic and powerless. The English curriculum points children to negative and bleak books and themes."

### **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 view, the critical gap is a shortage of infectious optimistic leadership. The news media has changed over the last 40 years from a balance between good news' and bad news' to believing the only news' is bad. I believe the commission should look at the role of the



conventional media in being a source of depression and anxiety."

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

The critical factors are the pessimistic media and negative language. I am happy to elaborate should the commission so desire.

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

"They need to be helped to find the source of their own optimism which will in turn make them more resilient, healthier and happier."

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

"We should include questions on optimism in the recruitment process and offer course and support for optimism ], resilience and better health."

**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?**

"I am not expert in this space. Having run three courses on optimism and optimistic leadership in prison, I am personally committed to doing more as the prisoners need optimism and resilience to survive prison and to thrive upon release."

**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?**

"Great emphasis on positive psychology and a greater emphasis on optimism. While it is good to hear the Prime Minister and Premier speaking about their own optimism, we need to create environments and spaces where that infectiously optimistic leader can be amplified and increased."  
"

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

Greater emphasis on optimism and promoting optimistic leadership.

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

The best data shows Australia has moved from being an optimistic country to a relatively pessimistic country. This is especially concerning in relation to the future of work and attitudes to national and global affairs. People feel powerless and the media generally promotes that feeling or powerlessness with constant attacks on leadership of any form. We need to lift the spirits of the whole community and in doing so will help to reduce the levels of depression and anxiety.





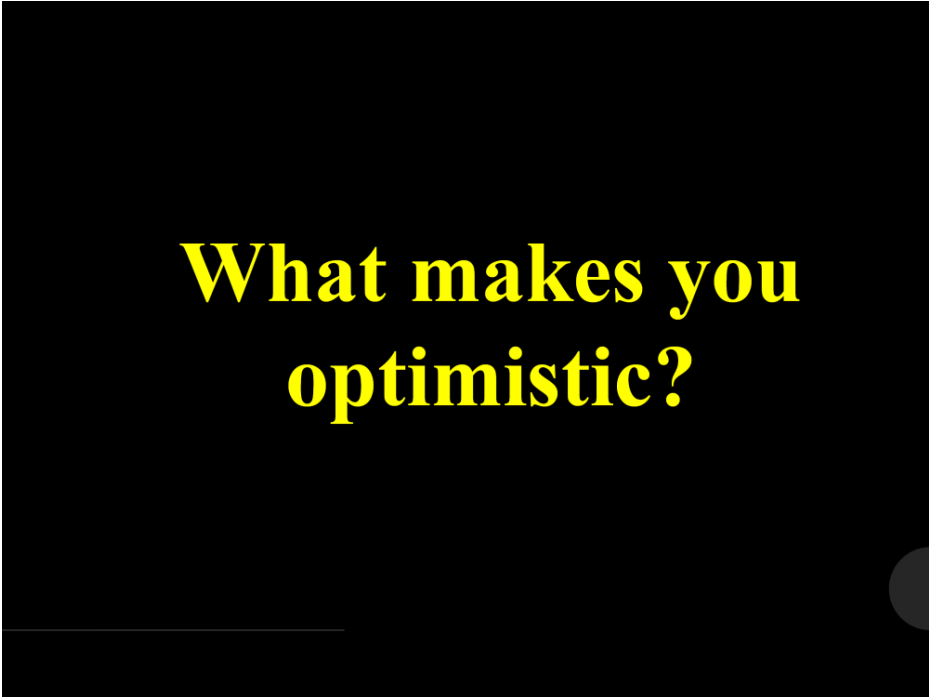
# THE OPTIMISTIC LEADER: HOW TO BE MORE INFECTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC



**The Leader is the Person  
I  
See in the Mirror**



**What makes you  
optimistic?**

A black rectangular box with yellow text. The text reads "What makes you optimistic?". In the bottom right corner of the box, there is a grey circle. A thin horizontal line is visible at the bottom left of the box.



# Jacinta Carroll

**"What makes me optimistic is  
that no matter where I go  
around the world and who I  
speak to, most people are  
positive, engaged, and want  
what is best for humanity."**

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## Michael Connory

"I am doing something worthwhile that helps people and companies. My team is making an incredible contribution to how companies and people can be secure in the digital world. That makes me optimistic!"

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# Tony Fish



"Just being me ...  
Waking up... Life"

@case4optimism



# Leo Lynch



"I am just happy to be alive so it's all upside 😊 I think IT enhances people's lives more than its negative effects. So that makes me optimistic.""

@case4optimism



# Brenda van Rensburg



"What makes me optimistic? Well, the opposite of optimistic is pessimistic. And being pessimistic is just too dark and dreary. Ever seen a happy pessimist? What makes me optimistic is making sure I never want to be a grumpy person on my death bed wishing I did more with my life."

@case4optimism



## Vishwanath Nair

"I am an optimist as I have a strong belief in my knowledge & capabilities and also the fact that, as hindsight proves it all the time, things are really not that bad for us to worry our heads off!!"

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# Iman Razavinejad

"Next generation IoT and innovation are what makes me optimistic: This will include smart cities, next-generation cars, energy providers, mining etc"

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# Daniel Redman

**"Optimism drives innovation  
in any strategy. It is the  
fundamental source of fire  
that lights the way for  
creativity to thrive."**

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# Vijay Varadharajan

**"The cornerstone of my optimism comes from the power of love and will that makes ordinary people do extraordinary things."**

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***GOOD AUSTRALIAN  
LEADERSHIP  
IS EGALITARIAN***





***GOOD AUSTRALIAN  
LEADERSHIP IS  
HUMOROUS***



*GOOD AUSTRALIAN  
LEADERSHIP IS  
AUTHENTIC*

*(No B.S.!!)*





***ALL GOOD  
LEADERSHIP IS  
OPTIMISTIC!***



**“Optimism is at the very core of leadership. The best leaders I have encountered in my career are those who remain optimistic — and ambitious — for their organisations even in the face of great adversity. They are those whose optimism enables them to recognise the potential in others, and help them develop to be leaders themselves”**

***Dominic Barton, Global CEO, McKinsey***







**“People talk about tenacity and resilience and strength of character, but it is optimism that drives behaviour when on some days it would be easier to say “stop - I give up, it’s too hard.” Optimism is believing in the impossible and then taking the steps to make it possible.”**

*Professor Jane Burns*



**“Optimism is the triumph of hope over fear, of truth over deception, but it must be grounded in reality. Optimism without realism is just a dream; hope alone is not a strategy. Detailed planning of scenarios, laying out of plans towards an ambitious goal, and then inspiring a team to climb that hill together with passion and a mission greater than oneself – that combination is a sure path to success.”**

***Mick Farrell, Resmed***



“We can’t have innovation without optimism  
- hope and confidence about the future. We  
now think of innovation in economic terms -  
about the wealth it will create - but  
innovation is creativity, it is doing and  
believing in making life better. Innovation is,  
in turn, optimism.

*Cecilia Hilder*



**“As an entrepreneur, you have to be  
an eternal optimist!”**

***Chris Gale, CEO of Latin Resources***



A close-up, artistic photograph of an hourglass. The top bulb is filled with dark, fine-grained sand, while the bottom bulb is partially filled with a lighter, coarser sand. The narrow neck of the hourglass is in the center, with a small stream of sand falling from it. The background is a warm, out-of-focus wooden surface with vertical grain lines.

## **Advantages of Optimism**

“The link between optimism  
and longevity is strong”

**Dr Carol Graham,**

Leo Pasvolsky Senior Fellow  
Brookings Institution





Advantages of Optimism

An optimistic  
spouse is  
better for your  
health!

University of Michigan



# *What to do?*

How do I become more optimistic?

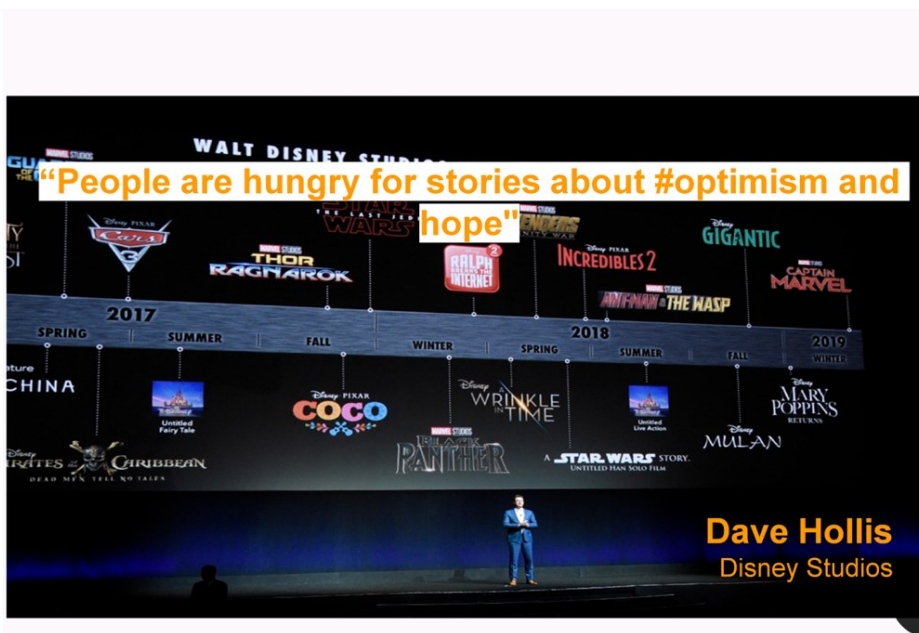




**How do you become more optimistic  
in a mire of bad news?**

**Turn off the News!**







*What to do?*

**Meditation**



# *What to do?*

## **Yoga**

"Daily practice of yoga and meditation are ways of achieving an optimistic mindset and presence. We can light up the room and light up the lives of people around us with a positive manner, mode of speech and a smile. I am so fortunate to have been a Yoga teacher for 50 years and inspire others to spread light, love, peace and optimism into the world."

Lilia Pertton, Yogi

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# *What to do?*

## **Gratitude**

A Journal or Daily Conversation about  
the best things that happened in your day

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*What to do?*

**Gratitude**

“Thanks”



*What to do?*

**Language**

Not too bad?

Reflect and give a considered positive response.



# *What to do?*

## **Language**

Ask Positive Questions Like  
“What is the Best thing that happened today?”  
rather than  
“How was your day?”

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The Leader is the Person You See in Your Mirror



**What makes you optimistic?**



**Jee Hyun Kim**

**Optimism is the  
evidence for the  
dreams yet to be  
realised**

[case4optimism.com](http://case4optimism.com)









# Anna-Marie Southern

"I would say that optimism is a gift; one which we are able to give to ourselves. I think it is the root of aspiration, and therefore movement and growth. I myself am optimistic because I am excited to discover what I have not yet done, but will achieve someday soon. Put simply, because I can be!"

@case4optimism





## **Linda Kristjanson**



**"Optimism is a key  
predictor of  
success in life."**

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# Scott Morrison

Prime Minister of Australia



**"We're an optimistic, we are a passionate, and we are an ambitious people, full of aspiration for ourselves, our families, and for our great nation."**

[case4optimism.com](http://case4optimism.com)



## Joanne Plummer

**"If not me or you, then who?  
And if not now or then,  
when? Good intentions are  
never enough."**

[case4optimism.com](http://case4optimism.com)





# Maureen Pound

"If I think good  
thoughts, I feel  
optimistic."

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# Carmen Williams



**"Optimism for me is a choice.  
When I cultivate optimism I feel  
more powerful and connected.  
Put simply I get better results  
and have more fun!"**

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**What makes you optimistic?**