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

Organisation Name
N/A

Name
Dr Matteo Senesi

What are your suggestions to improve the Victorian communitys understanding of mental illness and reduce stigma and discrimination?
"I accessed first hand the psychological support offered by ████████████████████ during the same sex marriage (SSM) debate in 2017, before the same sex marriage bill was approved by the Australian Government. During that time I felt my beliefs, my nature and my integrity was under scrutiny by politicians, show-biz and common people and re-opened childhood wounds and feeling I wish no one to have. I was approached by a friend working for ████ after some distress he noticed in me and suggested to contact ████ as there recently were awarded some funds for counselling around the SSM debated. At the beginning I was scared to look again in those times where I was considered as wrong and broken but under the pressure of the public opinion, i felt my anxiety rising and some depressive thoughts coming into my head. Luckily, I had a counselor throughout the SSM debate until the bill passed, so I could express my feeling and wind down weekly. Service like this, accessible, supported by the peer community, was vital for me at the time and I am convinced it is still vital for the majority of LGBT people, especially younger members, nowadays. Support is vital in critical moment but on the long term, integration and feeling of belonging are pivotal to increase resilience and happiness in LGBT people. Integration has to be personal and should be a choice of each of us. Having a job but not feeling respected or ""less""at work because gay is not integration. Being scared of your peers because the bully you or someone else does make you feel integrated at school. You can still go to school or to work everyday but it does not make you feel you belong at all."

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?
"LGBT Organisations and Mental Health go hand on hand as in the majority of the cases there is a mental health issue where there is queerness. The direction of the relationship between the two is unclear and debated still but that does not mean that it is pleasant to be reminded everyday you are broken or you might be so if you accept to be yourself. Debating an issue is a double edge sword because while you create a discussion to hopefully improve or fix a wrong, at the same time the group you are discussing about is on the public pedestal, ready to be judged by everyone that, by all mean, just want to have their say. Having support available from early childhood might help the idea that requiring help is normal and not just a manifestation of a sickness or when things are getting out of hand. At this stage intervention must be more drastic and sometimes already inefficient."

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

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.
"As above and integration programs where the person is allowed to express themselves, fully. Like social, recreational and sport opportunities"

What are the drivers behind some communities in Victoria experiencing poorer mental health outcomes and what needs to be done to address this?
Be sure that the requirement to access the service are minimal and diversified to accommodate different lifestyles of different communities or the single person

What are the needs of family members and carers and what can be done better to support them?
Feeling that giving help is not a big deal and just part of the relationship with a friend or a relative

What can be done to attract, retain and better support the mental health workforce, including peer support workers?
some sort of reward system without glorification

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?
"Reduce stigma around mental illness can reduce the fear around it and let people affected open up more people with similar condition and not, sharing strategies to control and mitigate symptoms."

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?
"The idea of mental health is dark and negative. The health care system should be moved on regular check ups rather than assistance when needed. In sexual health, a sexually active person goes for a check up every 3-6 months. if an infection is present, is treated, minimizing the damage to the single person and the social costs derived from spreading the STI and treating more people.How many times do we go for a blood test for diabetes per year? 1 or 0How many times we check heart or lungs or other vital organs? probably 0How many times we check with a professional about our mental health? Absolutely 0In sexual health, people that get tested regularly have also a decrease stigma around STI and and more competent set of tool to counter them. Mental health should be similar, get tested, recognize the early symptoms, know readily where to find help and get treatment."

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

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