

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

Organisation Name

Support Act

Name

Mr Clive Miller

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

"Our key suggestion is for an ongoing public health campaign to be implemented by the Victorian Government to highlight the importance of maintaining good mental health and creating the kind of behaviour and attitude change that we have seen with campaigns around seat belts, helmets, HIV/AIDS prevention, immunisation etc."

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 are many good programs run by many organisations such as BeyondBlue, headspace, Lifeline. The Government also provides excellent programs and resources through the Mental Health Commission and other State Departments. There has also been excellent research done in our interest area, the music and entertainment industry, by Entertainment Assist, which has identified that people working in music and entertainment suffer from anxiety, depression and other mental health conditions at rates that are 5-10 times higher than the rest of the community. The Arts Wellbeing Collective, based at the Victorian Arts Centre, is doing excellent work is seeking to create healthy workplaces for its members; along with tools and resources that are tailored to the needs of its members. Our organisation, Support Act, has recently established a free, 24/7 phone counselling service that is available to anyone working in music who is concerned about any aspect of their mental health and wellbeing. This is supported by targeted workshops that provide basic mental health first aid training and information that is sector specific, and which seek to create safe spaces for people to talk about their lived experiences, and understand what resources are available to them and/or their work colleagues / band mates / fellow performers. The impact of these activities is to provide access to support, help in reducing stigma, help in reaching the various genres and sub cultures within music, and to communicate in a way that lets them know that we understand their situation and that they are not alone. "

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

"As stated above, there are many good programs run by very credible NFP organisations in relation to suicide such as BeyondBlue, headspace, Lifeline. The Government also provides excellent programs and resources through the Mental Health Commission and other State Departments. In terms of what can be done better: Mental Health First Aid Training should be mandatory for students and even employees, so that we all have a basic understanding of mental health conditions, and perhaps most importantly, the tools to initiate conversations with friends, family and colleagues to help people access treatment should they need it. This is particularly true in relation to suicide. No one should be scared to ask someone if they are having suicidal thoughts if it means they can potentially save a life. MHFA training should ultimately be as common and accepted as physical First Aid Training. "

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.

"Some issues that make it hard include knowing who to reach out to if there is a concern or problem; and feeling comfortable about doing that. Disclosing a mental health condition can also be confronting and difficult. These are both stigma related. Programs and campaigns that promote an understanding that everyone experiences mental health issue, and that there is no embarrassment in seeking help, can be helpful. Providing relevant role models and examples of how people maintain good mental health can also be effective. For example, Support Act and Levi's created a campaign called Tune Ups in 2018 that provided real life examples of how people in the music industry maintain good mental health in their workplaces, while on tour etc. Creating safe spaces for people to talk about their mental health is a great way to encourage people to get information they might need for themselves or their colleagues. Our Support Act Mental Health Matters workshops explain many of the triggers for poor mental health that affect people in the music industry, and this in itself can be empowering and liberating. We also provide an industry specific solution through promotion of the Support Act Wellbeing Helpline which is staff by psychologists with specialised knowledge of the music industry. There are many excellent organisations working in the area of mental health, and it is important to encourage and facilitate different organisations to work together and not duplicate resources. Support Act is pleased to be entering into a formal partnership with the Arts Wellbeing Collective to extend the reach of the Wellbeing Helpline to their members, and we hope to adapt a number of the resources they have developed for use by our stakeholders. Providing mentorship that includes mental health management is another great way someone manage their mental health on an ongoing basis; and there is a great opportunity for Support Act to develop a program in the future to provide such a program to emerging artists and music workers. We are also keen to ensure that small and medium workplaces in the music industry have processes and policies in place to eliminate common stress triggers for mental health conditions such as harassment, bullying, discrimination; and that also encourage discussions around managing and maintaining good mental health. "

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

"In the music industry, key drivers that impact on mental health include: Low or irregular income - Music Australia's statistical snapshot from March 2016 states that "'56 percent of all Australian musicians earn less than \$10,000 from their creative income, with only 16 percent earning more than \$50,000'". Few safety nets - Only 3% of Support Act's service users have superannuation and only 1% have health insurance. When something unexpected happens, it quickly becomes a crisis. Working environment - Many people in music work at night and few roles require a 9am-5pm routine. Hours are often long and irregular. Transience - For music workers who tour, long periods are spent on the road. Touring Australia is especially difficult given the distances between gigs. Tours mean lots travel in buses, vans and flights and a lack of sleep. Touring may also mean separation from the support networks of family and friends. Competitive environment - The music industry is extremely competitive; music workers can face career anxiety, under-employment and uncertainty. Short term - For many workers, particularly artists and performers, career success can be short lived. Many have no skills to fall back on when their ability to earn a living from music ends. Physical strain - Many roles such as road crew are associated with increased risk of work related injury; tinnitus amongst performers is also common. Support Act has identified a number of potential strategies that we think could help to address the above: Work with managers and record labels to develop and implement a Mentally Healthy Workplace strategy for the music

industry Continue to deliver our Managing Mental Health Workshops to key stakeholder groups / develop issue specific workshops for the future Continue to work with Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) to provide leadership, coordination, and advocacy in support of better mental health within the music industry Explore solutions and learning from other industries and disciplines (eg AFL Players Association) including career mentorship programs for musicians Develop a communications plan to help reach the Indigenous Music Community in an appropriate way Develop an ongoing awareness campaign in support of the Wellbeing Helpline & materials to maintain profile & visibility Undertake research to measure our impact and effectiveness. The implementation of these ideas would require significant additional funding for Support Act to enable the continuation of our work in providing ongoing support through our existing Crisis Relief And Wellbeing Helpline services. "

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

"We would expand this question to include artist managers who are providing support to their artists; and artists, roadies and music workers who are providing support to colleagues. Our suggestions here are to: Provide easy access to training so this cohort can understand and manage the issues that a person in crisis is experiencing Provide information that helps them to understand what support services are available Facilitate easy access to such services especially access to Centrelink and NDIS "

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?

"One of Support Act's key goals is to help people in crisis return to work. This can be through the provision of short term crisis relief funding and through referral to the Wellbeing Helpline for counseling in any of the following areas: Anxiety, Depression, Suicidal Feelings, Loneliness esp. while on tour, Grieving, Career insecurity, Health Issues, Creative disputes, Relationship breakdown, Performance anxiety, stage fright, Stress Management, Alcohol & substance dependency, Financial Problems, Homelessness. The provision of these services is an important way of helping people in the music industry who are living with mental illness to improve their social and economic participation."

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?

We would like support for people in the music and entertainment industry to be a priority in the recommendations made by the Royal Commission.

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

"Develop public health campaigns to educate all people about the importance of maintaining good mental health; and providing timely and effective support for people with a mental health issue Continue to provide examples of organisations and communities who are developing effective

solutions and helping to destigmatise the issue. An example is the AFL Players Association, which has programs in place to help their players manage, monitor and get help with their mental health, and in the process, which help players understand that their mental health (and those of their team mates) is just as important as their physical health. Other organisations such as the Arts Wellbeing Collective, have developed sector specific resources for their members to create healthy workplaces, have access to MHFA, have access to the Support Act Wellbeing Helpline, and be able to manage the range of issues and triggers that can lead to mental ill-health as a result of touring, etc. Support Act, which provides crisis relief and mental health services to people in the music industry, currently provides access to phone counselling through the Support Act Wellbeing Helpline plus training workshops to help people understand the signs and symptoms of mental health; provides tools for having conversations with people who might need to access MH services; plus, suggestions for self care. With appropriate funding, we would like to develop sector specific resources for our stakeholders to create healthy workplaces, have access to MHFA, have access to the Support Act Wellbeing Helpline, and be able to manage the range of issues and triggers that can lead to mental ill-health as a result of the unique pressures of the music industry. This funding would help Victoria's mental health program to reach a group that research suggests suffers from anxiety, depression and suicide ideation at levels that are 5-10 greater than the rest of the community; and provide longer term solutions by ensuring that even small business environments can have the support they need to function happily and healthily; and that people in need can access support and resources in a timely and efficient manner. "

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

"The Victorian Government already seems to be doing great work in the area of mental health; and the Minister, Martin Foley, has been encouraging of Support Act's effort to provide crisis relief and mental health services to people in the music industry. In fact, the Government's strong support for the music industry already plays a key part in addressing some of the key triggers for anxiety and depression by fostering a thriving music industry and celebrating the creativity of all people in the industry. This leads to increased self esteem but most importantly, the ability to earn income. Our hope is that the Royal Commission will recognise the special needs of artists, roadies and music workers when it comes to mental health, and continue to support organisations and programs such as those provided by Support Act. "



SUPPORT ACT & LEVI'S® PARTNER ON NEW MENTAL HEALTH CAMPAIGN

'Tune Ups' content series to feature Australian artists and music industry leaders and identities, including rapper Briggs, manager Maggie Collins, and Amity Affliction's Joel Birch.

Hitting mental health head on, driving awareness for the Support Act Wellbeing Helpline amongst the music and creative industries.

For release – Wednesday 3 October 2018: Music industry charity **Support Act** and iconic denim brand **Levi's®** today announced the launch of a powerful new video series, [*Tune Ups: Mindfulness tips for musos and more*](#). The series is produced by youth media company **VICE**.

Aimed at tackling the alarming statistics around mental health in the music industry, the six part series will provide support and raise awareness of the new **Wellbeing Helpline** for artists and music workers in need of help.

Featuring rapper **Briggs**, DZ Deathrays manager **Maggie Collins**, the Amity Affliction's **Joel Birch**, Select Music's **Stephen Wade**, **Alex the Astronaut** and stage manager **Cam Batten**, *Tune Ups* highlights singer/songwriters, stage managers and agency heads who already practise ways to look after their mental health and wellbeing. From heading off the beaten track to appreciating native flora, to turning the kitchen into a comfort food factory.

"Everything with music is so unplanned and that seems overwhelming at times, because you don't have a structured 9-5 schedule," says Alex the Astronaut. "I get frazzled, panicking that I'm going to miss a flight or a set time...but I've found that doing half an hour in the gym can really change your day, even if you don't do a lot."

"A few years ago if you had a problem you would sort it out yourself," Cam Batten added. "I'm stoked that you don't do that now. Men can actually sit down now and go, you know what? I've got a problem. That's good."

The six *Tune Ups* videos will be featured on Vice Music channel **Noisey**, and other social media platforms, and can be accessed via the Support Act Home Page – **supportact.org.au**

"We are very grateful to Nicky Rowsell and Levi's for being the driving force behind the campaign," said Clive Miller, CEO Support Act. "Tune Ups highlights how important it is for all of us to be aware of our mental health, and provides some great examples of how people in our industry manage their wellbeing. We hope it inspires anyone who maybe doing it



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tough to know that they are not alone, and that they can reach out to our free, confidential Wellbeing Helpline at any time if they want to talk to someone about any aspect of their wellbeing."

Levi's partnered with **Support Act** and **Alberts** (through the **Tony Foundation**) in late 2017, to support the establishment of the Wellbeing Helpline as a critical first step to help Australian artists with their mental health.

"The creation of the 'Tune Ups' campaign came from a place of wanting to raise awareness and break down the stigma around mental health. It is such an important health issue that we face as a society generally speaking; but the statistics are substantially higher within the music and creative community and so we felt a social responsibility to further give back to create this content piece.

"We are really happy with the results and would like to thank our six artists and music industry workers for their honesty and participation. I truly hope that this can make a difference " said Nicky Rowsell, Levi's® Marketing Manager / Australia & New Zealand.

The full Tune Ups cast:

Briggs

Among his ARIA, APRA and triple j awards, his many writing and acting credits, and his sterling Twitter banter, Briggs has proven himself (again and again and again) to be one of Australia's most significant voices. And with that, comes great responsibility. Briggs finds solace and satisfaction in taking time out for himself, including here with his barber.

Joel Birch

Joel Birch is a photographer, illustrator, mural maker and perhaps, most famously, frontman of The Amity Affliction. He speaks openly and honestly about his coping mechanisms, which include drawing and photography.

Maggie Collins

On the odd occasion that Maggie Collins isn't buried in her laptop or waiting for a flight, as part of her job managing artists like DZ Deathrays and The Creases or programming the artist lineup for BIGSOUND, you've got an okay chance of finding her in the kitchen—making comfort food, and a bit of a mess—where she says her mental health gets a refresh.

Stephen Wade

Stephen Wade's twenty-something years in the business, and his thirteen years as owner of behemoth artist agency Select Music, has given him many a view behind the curtain of Australia's music business—and beyond. Still, "mental health is the most important issue in the whole industry", he says.



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Alex the Astronaut

Alex the Astronaut released her first record while living in New York on a soccer scholarship. So maybe it's not surprising that she finds respite in being physical—be it at the gym, on the field or, with a little help from a yoga app while touring.

Cam Batten

Once a roadie, Cam Batten now stage manages herculean projects like Falls Festival and A Day On The Green. While a big chunk of his time is spent on the road and focused on the job, Cam uses time alone to pursue his love of native plants in the cities he finds himself in. Meet Cam and the Everlasting Daisy.

You can view the compilation video [here](#).

Ends

ABOUT THE LEVI'S® BRAND

The Levi's® brand epitomizes classic American style and effortless cool. Since their invention in 1873, Levi's® jeans have become the most recognizable and imitated clothing in the world – capturing the imagination and loyalty of people for generations. Today, the Levi's® brand portfolio continues to evolve through a relentless pioneering and innovative spirit that is unparalleled in the apparel industry. Their range of leading jeanswear and accessories are available in more than 110 countries, allowing individuals around the world to express their personal style.

For more information about the Levi's® brand, its products and stores, please visit www.levis.com.au

ABOUT SUPPORT ACT

For the past 20 years, Support Act has provided support to artists and musicians who are experiencing some form of crisis. This can be due to financial hardship, ill-health, injury or mental health issues. Our goal is to provide breathing space to help people get back on track. We also provide support to pay for funerals; and we help service users and their friends to mobilise support from their networks through our Help a Mate program. The Support Act Wellbeing Helpline is a free, confidential 24/7 counselling service that is available to anyone working in Australian music who needs to talk to someone about any aspect of their wellbeing. It is available by calling 1800 959 500 or via supportact.org.au

For media enquiries please contact:

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Sometimes it all gets too much...

There has been a lot of discussion over recent years about the impact that mental health is having on music artists and music workers.

This has been prompted in part by a number of high-profile suicides, but there has also been anecdotal evidence from artists and music workers, managers, their friends and families about the disruption and devastation that mental health issues can have on careers, relationships and home life, and overall health and wellbeing.

The Support Act Wellbeing Helpline is a free, confidential counselling service that is available to anyone working in Australian music (all genres) who needs to talk to someone about any aspect of their wellbeing.

It is delivered in partnership with AccessEAP, and is staffed by professional counsellors who offer expertise in all areas related to mental health (depression, anxiety, addiction, suicidal feelings) as well as issues which can be mental health related (such as loneliness, relationship breakdown, financial worries, illness and workplace conflict).

The service is accessible 24 hours a day, 365 days per year by calling 1800 959 500 within Australia.

If you have patients who work in the Music Industry, please let them know about the Support Act Wellbeing Helpline.

The Support Act Wellbeing Helpline provides an opportunity for artists and music workers to discuss their problems in a supportive, confidential and non-judgmental environment with people who understand the challenges of life in the music industry.

Support Act is Australia's only charity delivering crisis relief services to music artists and music workers facing hardship due to financial stress, illness, injury, or mental health problems. A registered DGR, it was established in 1997 with support from its founding members APRA (Australasian Performing Rights Association), AMCOS (Australasian Mechanical Copyright Owners Society), ARIA (Australian Recording Industry Association) and PPCA (Phonographic Performance Company of Australia).

AccessEAP is a leading not-for-profit Employee Assistance Program provider with close to 30 years' experience in mental health and workplace wellbeing.

