

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

## Organisation Name

N/A

## Name

Mr Daniel Tesoriero

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

"I think time and education will help reduce the stigma. We have come a long way. As a gay man i can safely say it was easier to admit to people that i had a mental illness than it was to tell people i was gay. While society seems accepting on the surface and i think there is a lot of genuine sympathy out there, i am still hyper aware that no one wants to be friends with the chronically depressed suicidal guy. It's too hard. "

### **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?**

"When i could afford the private system when i first fell ill, i made a small but steady amount of progress. Once i hadn't been able to work for 6 months i lost my private health and things took a turn for the worse. I think what would have really helped me and would help me now is a mechanism to keep the wolves from the door while you recover. Banks ringing for money and even going so far as contacting people via my facebook to try and hound me got too much to bare. I have never hid from or denied my debts. but the interest hikes and constant phone calls along with losing my business and relationship just made me want to disappear and die. I spent two years trying to stay positive through that. harassing someone who is suicidal is just wrong. I guess what i'm saying is maybe a way of suspending debits in order to heal would go along way in helping people recover. Like placing them in a temporary protective bubble. It's impossible to heal and get back to work and your life when you are bogged down with this kind of stress."

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

"I think realising just how frighteningly high the suicide rate is for males is a start. I have to admit that when i looked around me at the private mental health hospital i was initially in, i was surprised that it was by far filled with female patients given how high the male suicide rate is. It feels like something is a miss. more needs to be done to help these men. I don't really know the answer, but what i can say is that i had to go digging to find out just how bad the suicide rate is among men and i shouldn't have had to, the number is so high we should be talking about everyday. The media should be mentioning it everyday. Ad campaigns should be addressing it every day. "

### **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.**

"Access is a big problem out in rural areas. The only other thing i can suggest here would be to take a walk through a private mental health facility, then go and check out a public mental health ward. The difference is staggering. for this reason i have mostly tried to go it alone, and i'm not the only one. unfortunately going it alone can have devastating outcomes for the families

involved"

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

I believe we have to find a way to get health services out to rural areas and launch a campaign targeting men to get help. By no means am I excluding women but it seems that they are more likely to reach out for help once the help is there. It's men that need the push.

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

I know when I was first released from hospital I had to be monitored by a family member at all times and was kept away from things I could harm myself with. The fact that I had this made me lucky. My parents had retired and moved me in with them. I think stronger financial assistance for full-time carers would be appropriate. Short term mental spells need to be addressed in a hospital in order to keep them safe.

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

All I can say is that I think the world of the people who helped me through my months in hospital. I don't know enough of their work conditions to comment further on this matter.

**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 always said that when I get better I would work on starting a free gym for men suffering mental illness. I find exercise helps me so much in my daily life. I think being able to go to a facility to exercise and participate in group activities would be amazing for young men. The mens shed works for older men but doesn't seem to attract younger men. Not sure how feasible it would be. It would have to require a referral from a doctor to stop people taking advantage of it I guess. The reason I say men only or gender specific is I have really noticed how differently men behave around women as opposed to other men. same reason why the mens shed works I guess. Anyway it sounds better when the whole plan is explained, but this is the gist of it. Not sure I will ever be well enough to pursue it on my own, but I want to try."

**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 need people who know it and that have lived through it to be more involved. This may help answer part of the question above as well. Put them to work in these areas even on a volunteer basis. It's amazing what a sense of purpose can do for someone who is suffering mental illness.

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

To be honest I'm not really sure. I think the things that I have outlined would be amazing steps forward. But not sure of all the bits involved in implementing them.

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

Sorry if this is poorly written. My mind is a bit scrambled with the medications. My spelling and

grammar tend to suffer as a result