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

Organisation Name
N/A

Name
Catherine Woods

What are your suggestions to improve the Victorian communitys understanding of mental illness and reduce stigma and discrimination?
Treating mental illness with the same dignity and respect as physical disabilities   Using mentor programs in schools and/or workplaces

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?
Providing thorough education to primary healthcare workers ie Doctors/GP's, nurse practitioner's about mental health symptoms, treatment and referral processes   Educating families of patients with mental health about best practice   Community outreach/mentoring programs rather than institutionalised care

What is already working well and what can be done better to prevent suicide?
Taking the emphasis off ATAR results and academic achievement   Fostering youth programs Returning to village living eg: Younger generations mixing with older generations

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.
the negative influence of social media? fear of missing out?   what can be done: More hands on/practical experiences with actual social interactions   --- Community centres with free programs that appeal to youth

What are the drivers behind some communities in Victoria experiencing poorer mental health outcomes and what needs to be done to address this?
create more employment opportunities, regardless of educational achievement

What are the needs of family members and carers and what can be done better to support them?
include them in the recovery process   link families that are suffering with families that have recovered - to share what has worked

What can be done to attract, retain and better support the mental health workforce, including peer support workers?
Stop making the institution a hellish environment so barron a dog would hate living in it!   Make the mental health surrounds a healing environment like in an acute hospital. The workers and the patients might behave with more dignity.   The staff currently make the patient and their families feel like criminals - the air of suspusion is crippling.

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?

in relation to people living with eating disorders I believe there needs to be a ONE on ONE recovery model to better improve the health outcomes.   Wholistic approach including family involvement based in the community   The needs of an eating disorder patient are far different to the needs of patients with other mental health issues. So why in the current model are they thrown into the same recovery program? Not only is it completely overwhelming for a frail, vulnerable teenager with Anorexia, it is also completely dangerous for them to be exposed to someone at a complete voilent breaking point, so lethal that they could knock over a large male with ease. Surely an environment that is safe and trusting is the first step towards recovery. A CLEAN, calm, gentle and healing atmosphere would be equally as important.

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?

Connecting with nature personalising care plans programs the exclusively treat eating disorders Involving people that have positively recovered from their mental health battles in terms of eating disorders - REMOVE THE FOCUS ON EATING - yes it's important but it doesn't have to be the focus of the day. At the moment this can be what it's like: finish lunch then spend the rest of the afternoon talking about "so how did eating lunch make you feel. Maybe instead "that was a nice lunch, lets go and look at a gallery/sketch in a park"

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

Remove the prison like punitive environment

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

I remember looking at the ripped, stained couches, mouldy walls and filthy carpet thinking surely I'm not in a hospital.   For 4 weeks I felt like a was a prisoner in my own body, mind and environment, completely hating every part of the world. This is surely not healing. Surely a safe soothing haven is what is needed for a person with a fractured mind.