

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

SUB. 0002.0001.0058

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

No Comment

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?

"MY CONCERNS ARE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN DISPLAYING WILFUL/CHALLENGING BEHAVIOURS AND THE LACK OF SUPPORT FOR THEM AND THEIR PARENTS. I don't think enough is being done to support parents of children displaying willful/problematic/manipulative/aggressive behaviours. I have suffered from BPD and major depression for a long period of time and as a child was classed as evil by my parents. I had little control over my behaviour and was highly anxious and manic. My thought process was speedy, I was intelligent and I wanted to do lots of things very quickly. My parents' response to this behaviour was to threaten me with abandonment/giving me away/sent to a children's home (old fort on the hill), I also experienced serious physical and mental abuse etc. anything to get me to control myself or punish me because I couldn't. This did little but increase my high anxiety making it even more difficult to control myself and left me with a lifetime of guilt, lack of self-worth and an overall deadening of my self so I wasn't rejected by anyone. I also wanted to end my life many times as I couldn't stop the feelings. I was one of those children who parents say if they had been the first there wouldn't have been any more. No-one else in my family had these behaviour problems. Little was available 60+ years ago to support parents who had children like this. I am the eldest of 5, but 67 years ago there was no effective birth control so they had little choice. Fast forward 27 years and my son also exhibited this behaviour. I was trying to bring him up alone and was very depressed myself. He was extremely wilful, aggressive, manic and self-destructive. I took him to the [REDACTED] hospital who met with him and said there is nothing wrong with him he is just wilful!!! Very nice what was I supposed to do with that diagnosis? How was I supposed to deal with him? Day care couldn't handle him, the school couldn't handle him. He eventually went to live with his father and his step mother and sisters within 3 months they wanted to send him back. I had a nervous breakdown at the thought of him living with me again. So he was sent to boarding school and I visited him each weekend. During this time at [REDACTED] Grammar he was sexually abused over a 5 year period by one of the teachers' assistants. This man confessed to this abuse along with the abuse of around 40 other vulnerable boys at this school. My son provided information to the Royal Commission on Sexual Abuse to Children at Private Schools. My son is now a highly functioning aggressive, manic and out of control alcoholic of 40 plus. He has BPD but won't get any treatment. He has been in rehabilitation 4 times but goes back to drinking anything to take the pain away from what he feels. He won't go to the psychiatrist for assistance. We are now estranged because of his behaviour and his frequent bouts of screaming at me on the phone for various reasons. I cannot emotionally support him anymore. Fast forward again another 35 years and I find that nothing has changed. There is still

no practical support provided to parents of children with these behaviours. I recently had a neighbour who had a 9 year old son who is displaying the same behaviours my son did. I listen to him screaming, being aggressing and crying at least 4 times a week. I spoke to his mother who said that she has tried to get help for him but is told he is not bad enough to warrant treatment. He was recommended to a psychiatrist but was told they couldnt help him because he lies!! Yes that is part of the behaviour. I know what she is going through and what he is going through WHY cant he get treatment WHY cant the mother get better support? WHY dont they listen to her about the extent of the problem?My granddaughter (my sons child) is 4yo and has also displayed the same wilful behaviour. I had to go online to an American website (www.themilitarywifeandmom.com) to find out what support was available for wilful children and I found a gold mine of support and resources from a person who provides practical and supportive advice in how to deal with these children. It workswe (my granddaughters mother and I) have been using the advice for 12 months and it really works while still allowing the child to maintain independence and self-worth. Parents of these children need support and something to hold onto so they dont think they are going crazy and they dont end up physically hurting their children because they cant cope as the children are so frustrating to deal with. Australian websites of the same ilk are filled with policy and advice from people who have no idea how to practically deal with these children.Adults who have a mental illness must have displayed behaviours that could have been picked up early so that the parents could learn better ways of dealing with them. These aggressive, anxious, manic children display these behaviours early on in their lives. My sister who lives in the UK has a son who has these problems, but her 2 daughters dont display this challenging behaviour. I know of a social worker married to a psychiatrist who has a son with this behaviour who grew up to be a drug addict and out of control, but her daughter didnt.Recently there was a case where a father shot his son in the head because he threw an omelette out of the door for the dog. This wasnt about the omelette this was about the lifetime of challenging behaviour displayed by the young man that was the last straw for the parent. No-one wins when you dont provide support for the child and the parent. The children turn out to be aggressive, anxious, manipulative, drug or alcohol abusing adults. They can be high achieving or down and out. The parents end up with a lifetime of shattered nerves, feelings of guilt they couldnt do better and often with a child who ended his/her own life. "

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

Provide better support to parents and children early in their lives to build better resistance and to manage challenging behaviours/thoughts.This support needs to consider children who are not aggressive/problematic enough on the gauge you are using.

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.

Lack of support to families to assist with children exhibiting behavioural problems. Sometimes the only solution to end the negative head talk or out of control and deep feelings of negativity and hopelessness is to self-medicate with alcohol/drugs or death.You need to be able to get to the parents of these children at the outset before it becomes out of control.One of the most successful things I found in managing my depression and BPD was meditation. This should be used in schools for all children in primary school.Provide free access to apps such as Headspace. (www.headspace.com)

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

Traditional abuse towards children by parents that is deemed normal in disciplining a child. Acceptance that challenging behaviours displayed by children is normal or that the child is just difficult. Lack of knowledge about support. Lack of practical support.

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

See response to question 2.

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

No comment

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?

No comment

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?

Prioritise the diagnosis and support of children and their parents displaying challenging behaviours. Widen your gauge for determining who can obtain support for this type of child.

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

No comment

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

I am happy to enlarge on my comments as I am aware that there is a wide spectrum of mental illness and not all will fall into the comments I have made.