



Planning your Submission to the Royal Commission into Mental Health



Consumer Cheat Sheet Royal Commission 11 Questions

When you make your submission to the Royal Commission, you'll come across their eleven questions.

This flyer explains the questions and has some tips for consumers making a submission.

Where are the questions?

- They're part of the online submission process
 - On the submission website (screens 3 and 4) <https://rcvmhs.vic.gov.au/submissions>
- They're in the cover sheet for postal submissions

Are these like the terms of reference?

- The questions are similar to the terms of reference, but not quite the same:
 - They ask some things that are *not* in the terms of reference (eg, stigma and discrimination)
 - They *leave out* some of the things in the terms of reference (eg, safety)
- The last question is very broad, so you can say most things under this one.

Do I have to answer them?

- No. You can answer none of these questions, or just one, some, or all of them. It's your choice.

What if I want to say different things to the questions?

- If you skip all the questions, you will need to submit a document or recording that tells them what you want to say. If you do this, you **MUST** include a [cover sheet](#), and ideally you should tell them how your submission relates to the terms of reference.

Submissions
open until
5 July 2019

About the Royal Commission

The Royal Commission into Mental Health has been set up to look at how to improve mental health services across Victoria.

It's running until the end of 2020.

Right now, they are asking the public to make 'submissions' to tell them about what's working, what's not working, and ideas to improve.

A submission can be as simple as a few short sentences, or it can be a long and complicated document—it's up to you.

This is an important opportunity for consumers to have their say about the mental health issues that matter most to you.

The list of questions

1. What are your suggestions to improve the Victorian community's understanding of mental illness and reduce **stigma and discrimination**?
2. 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**?
3. What is already working well and what can be done better to **prevent suicide**?
4. 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.
5. What are the drivers behind **some communities** in Victoria experiencing poorer mental health outcomes and what needs to be done to address this?
6. What are the needs of **family members and carers** and what can be done better to support them?
7. What can be done to attract, retain and better support the mental health **workforce**, including peer support workers?
8. 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?
9. Thinking about what Victoria's mental health system should ideally look like, tell us what areas and reform ideas you would like the Royal Commission to **prioritise for change**?
10. What can be done now to **prepare for changes** to Victoria's mental health system and support improvements to last?
11. Is there **anything else** you would like to share with the Royal Commission?

The questions with explanations & ideas

The 11 questions are all listed in the table below. For each question we've given you:

- A simple explanation in plain language
- Suggested topics that might fit under this question

Questions	Simple Explanation.	Topics that <i>might</i> fit here <small>This column has things we've often heard consumers say at VMIAC, that fit next to each question. But YOU don't have to use these topics, they're just here to get you thinking. There are lots of other things you might say too.</small>
<p>1. What are your suggestions to improve the Victorian community's understanding of mental illness and reduce stigma and discrimination?</p>	<p>'Mental illness': What does 'mental illness' mean to you? How do you want other people to understand your experience?</p> <p>Stigma means: <i>Bad attitudes about people diagnosed with 'mental illness'.</i> What would help you feel more accepted and welcome in your own community?</p> <p>Discrimination means: <i>Being treated differently because you are diagnosed with mental illness.</i> What would make sure you are treated in a fair way by other people? Some people call this 'equality'. Other people prefer to say 'equity'.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumers explain mental illness in lots of different ways. Some of us find mental illness labels really helpful, and some of us really dislike them. • Ways that stigma or discrimination gets in the way of you having a job, a home, an education, paying bills, getting paid fairly. What can help. • Be accepted by friends and family • Not feel like people are afraid of you, or make assumptions about you • When you go to hospital, be treated the same as people who are not in the mental health unit • Safe from violence, bullying and harassment • Treated fairly by police, the courts
<p>2. 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?</p>	<p>What could stop 'mental illness' from happening in the first place?</p> <p>What did you need when you first became unwell?</p> <p>Did you get treatment early enough?</p> <p>Did you get something that helped or hurt?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trauma (abuse, bullying, crime, violence, etc) and adversity • Social determinants of health • Support for parents & families • Early attachment • Alternatives to emergency departments and medical treatment • Access to GPs in regional areas • Access to therapy & counselling • Community-based services
<p>3. What is already working well and what can be done better to prevent suicide?</p>	<p>What has helped you stay safe from suicide?</p> <p>What didn't help you stay safe from suicidal actions?</p> <p>Did anything make you feel more at risk of suicide?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Rooms (EDs), long waiting times, feeling judged or told to go home • CAT team • People saying 'it's just a cry for attention' or ignoring you • PARC services / step-up, step-down • Peer support • A safe place to go to • Being scared to ask for help • Good friends • Crisis phone lines

Questions	Simple Explanation.	Topics that <i>might</i> fit here (but YOU decide)
<p>4. 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.</p>	<p><i>This is the main question to talk about mental health treatments and services.</i></p> <p>What do you think about the mental health treatments and services you have had?</p> <p>What does 'good' mental health mean to you?</p> <p>What helps you to get this?</p> <p>What makes it hard for you to have good mental health?</p> <p>What has made your mental health worse?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical models, biomedical models • Trauma informed care • Recovery oriented practice • Peer support • Consumer-run services • Impact of things like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Compulsory treatment – Coercive treatment – Being in hospital • Community support services • Talking therapies and counselling • Addressing social determinants of health • Crisis support, ongoing support
<p>5. What are the drivers behind some communities in Victoria experiencing poorer mental health outcomes and what needs to be done to address this?</p>	<p><i>Drivers means: Causes</i></p> <p>Do you come from a community that makes it harder to have 'good' mental health?</p> <p>What are the main issues?</p> <p>What has helped?</p> <p>What could make a difference?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intergenerational trauma, racism • Misogyny, family violence, sexism, gender-based violence • Bullying, harassment • Rejection by family, discrimination, homophobia • Regional distances from services, long waiting times for GPs in regional towns • Information not translated, interpreters not available, services not culturally sensitive
<p>6. What are the needs of family members and carers and what can be done better to support them?</p>	<p>This help sheet is for consumers, but some consumers are also carers.</p> <p>If you're a carer, talk here about what you need to be supported.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to respite • Information • Being included if the consumer consents to it • Support with own wellbeing
<p>7. What can be done to attract, retain and better support the mental health workforce, including peer support workers?</p>	<p>If you're a peer worker, talk here about what's needed for the peer workforce.</p> <p>What do mental health workers do well?</p> <p>What are the issues with mental health workers? You might talk about their skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours.</p> <p>Do mental health services have all the kinds of workers you need? If not, what's missing and how could it help?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of community support workers • Not enough peer workers • No enough counsellors or therapists • Not enough staff trained in basic therapeutic skills • Over-medicalised training <p>Workplace issues for peer workers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underpaid, undervalued • Bullying, harassment & discrimination • Co-opting of peer work practice • Pathways into peer work • Burnout, exposure to violence

Questions	Simple Explanation.	Topics that <i>might</i> fit here (but YOU decide)
<p>8. 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?</p>	<p>Social participation means: <i>Having friends and close relationships, joining clubs and groups, being part of your community.</i></p> <p>Economic participation means: <i>Things like getting an education and a job.</i></p> <p>Both of these things can be affected by stigma and discrimination, and by practical things like not having transport or money.</p> <p>Has 'mental illness' got in the way of social or economic participation for you? How?</p> <p>What has helped?</p> <p>What makes it harder?</p> <p>What could be done to help more?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centrelink issues • Loss of community support services • NDIS access • Myths that consumers are violent • Lack of reasonable adjustment • Peer communities • Social enterprises • Pathways to study and work
<p>9. Thinking about what Victoria's mental health system should ideally look like, tell us what areas and reform ideas you would like the Royal Commission to prioritise for change?</p>	<p>What are the most important things that should be changed?</p> <p>You might have listed lots of changes in your other answers—in this answer you could pick the top 3, 4 or 5 things that you think are most important and tell them why they are important.</p>	
<p>10. What can be done now to prepare for changes to Victoria's mental health system and support improvements to last?</p>	<p>We think lots of people might find this a hard question to answer, but if you have some ideas you should share them.</p> <p>Think about any changes you recommended in other questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there some things that could be done now, that would help get people ready to make the bigger change later? • What would make sure that any change you recommend lasts for a long time? <p>Do you work in mental health (eg, peer worker or consumer consultant)? You might have noticed what stops improvements from lasting. If so, share your ideas here.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing training in things like recovery and sexual safety, instead of doing it once-off. • Too many documents, not enough real change. • Public, transparent reporting on every mental health service.

Questions	Simple Explanation.	Topics that <i>might</i> fit here (but YOU decide)
11. Is there anything else you would like to share with the Royal Commission?	<p>You can say anything here that didn't fit in the other questions.</p> <p>These are some topics that lots of consumers speak about that were not mentioned in other questions, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety • Human rights • Making our own decisions • The Mental Health Act • Community mental health services • Impact of the NDIS • Side effects of treatments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seclusion and restraint • Sexual violence in hospitals • Compulsory treatment and informed consent • Supported decision making • Mental Health Act protections – do they work? • Mental Health Tribunal • Police interactions • Advance statements • Nominated persons • Mental health research • Issues with housing & homelessness, being discharged into homelessness • Access to advocates and lawyers • Cuts to community mental health support services, including drop-in services

More info on our web site

You can find more information about making a submission to the Royal Commission on VMIAC's web site:

www.vmiac.org.au/RCMH

Peer support is available

Our VMIAC Royal Commission peer support team is also on hand to help out, if needed.

We have a peer worker on duty Mondays and Wednesdays in our Brunswick East office, between 10am – 4pm.

- Contact us for advice or support by phone or email
- Or make an appointment to see us in person

Note: Please don't pop in unannounced as we can't guarantee someone will be available to see you.

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