

National Mental Health Consumer Alliance



We can't move forward with our eyes, ears and hearts closed – the Alliance supports calls for an acknowledgement of harm

Today a group of lived experience leaders have released a report provided to the Victorian Minister for Mental Health. The independent report, commissioned by the Victorian Government, recommends the establishment of a Restorative Justice Process to support people with lived experience to share and process their experiences of harm in the mental health system, followed by a formal apology for the harms they raise. The National Mental Health Consumer Alliance (Alliance) wholeheartedly supports these recommendations.

The report highlights that a Restorative Justice Process provides consumers and survivors, as well as families, carers, and supporters, with a process to safely share the impact of harm in mental health and associated systems. These harms include human rights breaches, coercion, racism, sexual safety breaches and discrimination. This process – which is open to all Australian governments to consider – would work within communities, be overseen by people with lived experience, and produce a report that formally documents harms. Done well, this process can create the foundations for a more fair, inclusive and equal relationship between people who use services, and people who deliver and fund them.

The report states that only following this Restorative Justice Process, can an apology from the Victorian Government be provided. In drafting this apology, the Victorian Government should work closely with the communities who are identified as having been harmed.

The Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council (VMIAC), as consumer peak body in Victoria, has worked closely throughout the development of the report.

VMIAC CEO Craig Wallace notes the significance of this report: “For such a long time we have heard from consumers and survivors of the mental health system about how harmed they have been by the system and how this harm gets in the way of them accessing mental health services and/or contributing their expertise to the reforms of Victoria’s mental health system. An acknowledgement of harm and apology is critical to addressing these issues”.

In mental health reform the community, sector, and government have too often closed their eyes, ears, and hearts to disclosures of harm. Taken up, these processes present an opportunity. Through them, we can transform relationships and our mental health systems.

VMIAC and the other rest of the Alliance will continue to play a constructive role progressing calls for an acknowledgement.

The full report can be accessed at: <https://www.livedexperiencejustice.au/>

Over 135 years' experience of leadership, representation and advocacy by, for and with consumers who have a lived experience of mental health issues