



## Response to the Mental Health Royal Commission

### *Terms of Reference Consultation*

Star Health is a major provider of health, mental health and community services across Melbourne. We offer a variety of services including: mental health, alcohol and other drugs, counselling, GP, dental, allied health, Indigenous health, family violence and health promotion across Local Government Areas including: Stonnington, Port Philip, Bayside, Glen Eira and Kingston.

Star Health warmly welcomes the Government's initiative to establish a Royal Commission into Mental Health. Star Health believes this is an unprecedented opportunity to reshape the mental health system to better meet the needs of Victorian consumers and carers. Star Health is looking forward to participating fully in the Royal Commission.

Regarding the scope of the Royal Commission's work, Star Health is particularly keen for the Royal Commission to explore and seek to address the impact on consumers of the transition of community mental health services to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). During this transition period, our staff are hearing stories of some consumers who had been managing their mental illness well through the community health system but are not eligible for the NDIS. We have concerns that without a strong community mental health system, inclusive of psychosocial rehabilitation and recovery support, consumers like these may fall through the cracks or end up in the acute system, when they otherwise would not.

*"Having Steph (community mental health worker) there helps keep me well. She knows if I am not doing well and helps get me back on track. Without Steph I would be in and out of hospital for sure"*  
Star Health Consumer, David, 34

Star Health welcomes the recent investments by the Victorian Government in community mental health that have been made in acknowledgement of these issues. The Mental Health Royal Commission provides a further opportunity to consider the role and value of community mental health in the broader mental health system. The work of the Royal Commission in considering how different parts of the mental health system including community health can better work together for ultimate benefit of consumers is absolutely critical for Star Health.

In response to the survey questions, some additional themes/comments for consideration in developing the Terms of Reference for the Mental Health Royal Commission from Star Health are:

1. **System-wide approach** – Whilst the 10 themes provide an excellent starting point for the Terms of Reference, Star Health believes it is also important that the Royal Commission takes a holistic approach exploring what will work best for consumers across the entire system. That is, the Royal Commission should ensure that throughout the process it is anchored by a view of the broader mental health system (and related systems/services) and how consumers might move between the different systems/services (which can often be siloed from each other). This should include:

- a. The interface between acute, clinical and community systems/services, including the critical capacity of community-based services in providing community-based services and avoiding unnecessary acute service contact.
  - b. The interaction with other services outside the mental health system, such as housing, family violence and justice, in addition to AOD as has already been highlighted.
2. **Consumer-centred** – The Royal Commission should ensure that it starts with what will work best for consumers, particularly in accessing different types of services at different points in time (given that mental illness, and use of different types of services of different levels of intensity, can often be non-linear). Client choice in the system, and consumer-reported outcome measures, should also be considered.
3. **Co-design approach** – The Royal Commission should consider using a co-design approach that values and draws on lived experience to envision what a reshaped system might look like, and develop recommendations to work towards this.
4. **Community mental health & NDIS** - The Royal Commission should seek to:
  - a. Understand the impact on people at all levels of mental ill health of the dismantling of the Mental Health Community Support Services service system (community mental health) in the context of the NDIS.
  - b. Determine how to best provide appropriate, ongoing psychosocial support for those who don't meet threshold of NDIS, can be supported early to prevent the development of psychosocial disability or need support pre access.
  - c. Consider how to leverage and make best use of existing community mental health assets and workforce.
5. **Understanding and seeking to address key factors affecting mental ill health, including:**
  - Social determinants of health.
  - A focus on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), chronic PTSD and personality disorders.
6. **A rehabilitation and recovery focus** – Ensure the system provides psychosocial rehabilitation and recovery interventions to minimise the development of disability.
7. **Vulnerable population groups** – Consider any potential variation required in responses/models for vulnerable population groups, e.g. Aboriginal people, people who are Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD), people who are ageing, people who identify as LGBTIQ.
8. **Interaction between Commonwealth and State programs/funding** – Whilst Victoria may not be able to directly change Commonwealth-funded programs, this Royal Commission could highlight potential opportunities for shared reform that could ultimately benefit consumers.

Star Health thanks the Victorian Government for the opportunity to provide input into the development of the Terms of Reference for the Mental Health Royal Commission. We look forward to providing further input as part of the Royal Commission's work, and contributing to improving outcomes for Victorian mental health consumers.



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Star Health