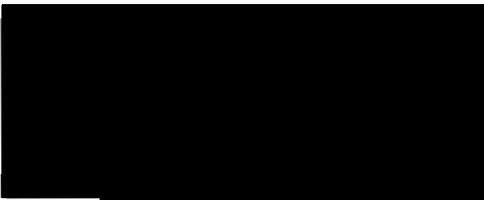


DAVID HARRIS



Ph



the best time to phone me would be
of an afternoon on Mon, Tues, Thur,
Sat. - or Sunday

email:



10 - 1 - 22

Hello! After talking to you, or someone,
re the submission, I am enclosing my submission.

As I've enclosed, I feel my submission would
be most helpful because I've got a unique
combination of:

lived experience

Counselling skills

writing skills (I've written a
book, which I'll send to you, if you
are interested)

Speaking skills

I really hope you will contact me - or someone else
of your organisation can contact me - because, as I say
in the summary, together we can turn this review
into a massive/powerful tool for implementing
much needed change.

Lets keep on working together on this, okay?

Yours faithfully
David Harris

1

My Background

(so you know who I am and can appreciate my points of view)

I was born [REDACTED] at Southport, Qld, and have lived all my life on the Gold Coast.

At age 17 I was in my last year of high school at [REDACTED], feeling stressed about end of year exams, like so many other students.

However, I had a 'crush' on one of my teachers which added to my stress level. At home I was neglected and felt unable to tell any of my brothers.

So, in desperation, I went to a psychiatrist, hoping, naively for a 'quick fix' along the lines of him saying, "Lots of children have crushes on their teachers. The fact is that she's much older than you. How about writing your feelings down for her on a piece of paper and then tear it up and then put your full focus on your exams, etc."

Instead, however, he gave a wrong diagnosis.

One day, after school, I came home to find the police! They didn't talk to me or wanted to know about the teacher or my family. Instead I was driven in the police car with my mother to a psychiatric clinic at a hospital two hours away.

I'll spare the details but I will say that in the week I was there, I was sexually assaulted by female nurses a number of times, was tortured, given E.C.T. repeatedly told I had no legal rights and was put on medication which was so powerful I struggled to think clearly, let alone speak.

2

After a week I was released, on the strict condition that if I stopped medication, which left me permanently incapacitated and if I told anyone about the sexual abuse, I'd be sent straight back there where the same thing will happen.

From 1976 (when I was 17) to 2014 I suffered severe effects of PTSD (I still do), need speech therapy to be able to speak at all; relationship with my mother and my three older brothers, and their families deteriorated: I was unable to do full time work (and still can't). I was unable to have a relationship. Its embarrassing and humiliating to write this, but at the age of 62, I've still never kissed a lady, never had even a coffee date and no one has ever told me they loved me. I suffered from anxiety, depression and was unable to express any emotion for 38 years.

In 2011, after being thrust into the role of being a carer for my mother for 8 years, with no family support, my mother died.

I had no living or coping skills. I decided to kill myself. I tried. I failed, even at that.

In 2014 something happened which caused me to decide to study counselling at Community Training Australia.

After a short time I spoke to a teacher at the college and the other students about my past.

I broke down. I cried, for the first time in 38 years.

I was supported. Yes! I was encouraged to take action against the institution/hospital in which I suffered the abuse and which effectively caused my life to be ruined, stolen away from me.

I ended up receiving a diploma in counselling!

I studied hard and since then have

- Diploma of Community Services (Alcohol, Drugs and Mental Health)
- Certificate in Relationship Counselling
- Certificate of Attendance for Back In Control Drug Education and Relapse Program (so I could communicate with and understand drug users)
- Facilitated overcoming Addictions ~~work~~ Support Group for MIF&
- Facilitated a men's group for MIF& (mental illness fellowship of Qld)
- Volunteered for Drug Arm
- Volunteered for Fred's Place, helping to feed and counsel the homeless. Crunby St Vincent de Paul
- Did training at lifeline to be a crisis support for them
- Volunteered for beyondblue, and, this year, should be a speaker for them
- Volunteer for Red Cross, chatting with aged people on behalf of the Red Cross
- Volunteering for Kirrahaven, facilitating the running of the men's shed at the aged care facility
- Volunteer at the lifeline of Shop in Coolangatta
- Attended a number of suicide seminars run by Care for Life, Wesley Mission, MIF&, etc
- Went from a position where I needed speech therapy to joining Toastmasters, where I have a leadership role and received a number of awards for public speaking!
- Written a book (published) titled:
'LIVING YOUR LIFE THROUGH VERSE'
which includes poems on suicide, grief, domestic violence, respect, nutrition, relationships, etc
- I've done / am doing, a vast amount of research on subjects such as D.V., suicide, alcohol, smoking, drugs, other addictions, exercise, music, pets, aged care, anxiety, depression, anger, etc including link between social media & suicide, D.V

4

My poem on Grief (from my book) :

The word 'Grief' can take many forms
 It can be felt following the loss of / separation
 From a partner, parent, child, sibling, pet, job or
 Someone who you never met but somehow felt close to
 It is an intensely personal experience which needs
 patience, love, support, understanding and a listening
 ear from those around you.

There can be a lot of guilt, of regret
 After a person you cherished has passed away.
 "Why didn't I tell them how much I loved them?"
 "Why is it me that had to stay?"

Children, like adults, need to express their feelings
 whether it be through words, music, hugs or play
 How would you like to remember the loved one?
 Ask yourself, ask your children, okay ...

We are born, we love, we learn, we experiment
 with all that life has to offer... and then we die.
 The grieving process is painful as we find it hard
 to say, 'Thanks for being you' as we say goodbye.

When someone who we feel close to, dies, I believe
 that some parts of their character shift to us.
 As such, the cherished one is never totally lost.
 Which of their traits you'd like to adopt is a topic to discuss.

What do you think of that poem?

I read it when I attended a 2 day workshop on Grief
 and Loss run by blue care, in 2019. I have counselled people
 suffering from grief at times since.

Also, from 2014 - 2022, the struggle

After 38 years of emotional numbness, 1976-2014, I would say I've struggled with emotional stability since then. Caused in part by having to relive the sexual abuse and torture many times as part of the process of seeking compensation. To give you an idea, from 2017 to 2022 I had 468 sessions with counsellors, social workers, psychologists, therapists (including a sex therapist) and crisis lines, talking to people from such organisations as Beyond Blue, D.V. prevention centre, SAMS (Survivors and Mates Support Network), Lifeline, men's line, EAP, Blue Knot, Relationships Australia.

One of my worst experiences I'd like you to especially take note of is the following:

3 years ago, I went to a police station to make a statement re the sexual abuse, etc I suffered in 1976 and following struggle, which would be/will be used when my case goes to mediation this year. Going to the police station I expected/hoped for the police to be understanding, for there to be support for me, empathy also.

However, I was interrogated by 2 policemen as if I was the perpetrator, not a victim. They were literally right in my face. There was no one there to support me. It was distressing.

Leaving the police station I felt, "No wonder victims of sexual abuse don't go to the police. If I, or someone, bashed someone, I'd feel the police would take the side of the criminal, not the victim."

As such, please, when victims of abuse go to the police, it must be compulsory for there to be a support person with them.

Based on my lived experience
 my struggle
 my speaking skills
 my writing skills
 my counselling skills
 my research, knowledge, understanding

I feel, I know, I have a lot of helpful information and insights for you. I will, in a moment, include some recommendations. However, as I hope you'll agree, I would like to remain in contact with you to make the review as effective as possible and for there to be 3-6 monthly updates/reviews to ensure that the recommendations are indeed implemented.

Again, please, contact me so we can work together on an ongoing basis...

Some of these recommendations are based on what I've found helpful, what works, what doesn't work, flaws in the system, areas to consider, blunt reality, research, etc. - as I said. From my unique perspective of being a victim of abuse, attempting suicide, receiving so many insights, so much information, counselling from others and counselling for others.

As well, please remind me to send you a copy of my book, 'Living Your Life through Verse' which will provide you with valuable insights...

Also, I attended National Apology Day in Canberra in 2018 and have enclosed a 2 page copy of my article about that, titled, 'The greatest day of my life' (on pages 16 & 17)

I have written a message on my front steps titled, 'STOP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE' and have worn a singlet with this words during marathons to promote that message.

The reality / what's happening now

- Children are growing up more attached to social media than their parents, family and society at large. They don't look at other people, only the screens in front of them. They see images on screens, whether they be pornographic images, violence or so called models and are subjected to bullying and all sorts of abuse. As such, as research shows: as a direct result of children's attachment to social media / addiction to social media, the physical, the emotional, the psychological affects include:
 - The current generation of children will be the first in history to have a shorter lifespan than their parents
 - Children have developed anxiety, anorexia, suicidal tendencies, eye problems, back and shoulder problems and have a distorted view of relationships and sex.
 - In pornographic images which children see, often the male rapes the female and the female says how she enjoyed it - and/or - the male bashes the female with no remorse and laughs and the female victim is either powerless or says she enjoyed it. (in cases above it can be male or female who is victim)
- As such, there is no doubt that Domestic Violence rates will continue to increase/skyrocket - because children, addicted to social media, see violence, abuse, rape, etc as both acceptable and perfectly normal, even fun!

I live next to a state school, a primary school.

One day I was in my backyard when I overheard one child (aged about 8) talking to another child, saying, to use his words, "I saw a video of you wanking"

How sick is that?!

I have much more information on the social media impact on children, should you wish to read it.

However, I hope from the above, you realise that social media has a devastating impact, a violent impact, an unhealthy impact on children.

8 It must be banned in primary school and its use strongly limited in high schools.

Bringing up children / Parenting

In relation to mental health, parenting has a massive impact. Being a parent brings with it, a lot of responsibility for the psychological and emotional welfare of the child, as well as the physical. While new parents are informed as to who to turn to when the child has physical illness, they are ignorant, naive, not informed as to the child's psychological and emotional welfare.

Here is an example of what needs to happen (an abbreviated example):

- The parents tell the child and reassure the child that they love them and are there for them. As the child grows older they are told and reminded that they are there for them (to prevent 'minor' issues developing into major issues). The children are encouraged to write, to speak, to use their imagination, to create. When there is a news story on television about people being killed, for example, the parents discuss it with the children (depending on their age) to prevent the child feeling sad, even depressed.

Exercise is vital. A family which plays together grows together.

Real exercise, fun exercise, is far more healthy, as discussed earlier, than staring at a TV screen or mobile phone / computer, etc

There needs to be 'time outs' when as a family, the individuals talk about anything and everything, so that the child is able to talk about feeling anxious about an exam or a sporting contest, etc

Discipline is vital. The child needs to learn what is acceptable and what isn't ... and the consequences of unacceptable behaviour.

Also in relation to parenting, it's vital that the child (regardless of the child's age) sees and hears not only the love by one parent for the child, but by both parents, and the love one parent has for the other. This again has massive impact...

When the situation is that one parent yells and screams and even hits the other, the child sees and hears this and is either upset/disturbed/distressed/traumatised or feels that is acceptable and normal and when the child becomes a parent they adopt the same behaviour.

Of course the partners (husband/wife) will have arguments at times, but ... for the welfare of the children, these should be kept away from the children's sight/ears.

On that theme of relationships, as countless books have described, there are differences within a relationship. At times one person will be a 'pain in the neck' and at times, so will the other ... perhaps both at the same time!

The key, mental health wise, in relation to that, is to, rather than let a whole lot of annoying elements of their partners' behaviour build up over time and then explode when one action or comment is 'the straw that breaks the camel's back' (with anxiety, sadness, frustration, anger, depression, helplessness, hopelessness building) - this can lead to not only an argument but violence - even murder - is to talk to each other regularly, not just commenting on what annoys them (ie 'Gee I hate it when you don't wash up') but on what they find really nice, (ie 'Gee, I love it when you always make a point of saying you love me before I go out').

In this way, prevention, (that word again!) is much better than cure.

On that subject, when one person does an act of domestic violence, there is no excuse, domestic violence is a crime. The perpetrator must go to jail...

Anxiety, Depression

I call anxiety, "waiting for the call that never comes" and Depression "when you are at the bottom of an abyss and helping, understanding hands seem a long way away" (I have poems about both in my book)

Re anxiety I've found what is most effective is to re-focus your thoughts and actions on something else, so that when the call does come it happens sooner than expected. Also, of course, talking with a specialist, family and friends is most helpful.

Re depression, it can be really hard to deal with, and at times it seems like there is no help, no quick solution.

I've found that again it's effective and helpful to refocus, this time with more use of the senses and of noticing the beautiful aspects of life such as flowers, etc.

Again, specialists, family and friends, especially specialists are needed.

Someone you know might be going through a tough time, even depression. Maybe you haven't heard from them for a while. If that's the case, why not call them, today! Your words may well have more of an impact than you realise...

MIS-USE

What is annoying, and wrong, is that some people mis-use the system by saying they have a mental health issue as an excuse for committing a criminal act, such as Domestic violence, robbery, fraud, etc.

This seems to happen more and more now. Someone does a crime. Their lawyer says, "Tell the judge and jury you've been suffering from depression, and you never know your luck - you're more likely to get a shorter sentence. You may even get off completely."

Coordination / Cooperation

In theory it may seem that Lifeline, beyondblue, E.A.P. Samsa men's line, 1800 Respect, Wesley mission etc all work together, with very similar values, that the organisations agree with each other and the people are friendly with each other and that all the counsellors/psychologists, crisis support folk etc, have a similar amount of empathy and that they all make a very positive impact on people.

In reality, we found that to be not the case.

For example I was told by someone at men's line that as soon as you tell Lifeline you're not going to suicide, they "switch off" while I've heard (and this may surprise you) that Lifeline over-react, even panic, when you mention the word, "suicide" to the point where it actually deters people from calling Lifeline or beyondblue.

Some person from one of those organisations said another counsellor from another organisation was unprofessional, etc

With some of those organisations, what they don't care to realise is that it takes a lot of courage and can be painful to call a certain number, say your situation, even cry, only to be told to call later or to call someone else to repeat the story. Again that is frustrating and deters people from calling...

Yes - there is no denying that the lives of some people are saved by calling some of those organisations.

Yes - there is also no denying that the lives of many more people would be saved and managed in a guiding, healing pathway. If there was a more coordinated, empathetic, less dismissive, more genuine approach by those organisations...

R U OK?

A lot has been made about that question in the media, and I gather its been effective, to a degree.

However, I feel due to Covid, people are ^{more} less willing to approach another person and ask that question.

(For example, 3 weeks ago I had an accident, called out in pain and struggled to even walk, etc - yet no one asked if I was ok!)

What would be much more effective and I hope you agree it needs to be implemented, ~~is~~ through media and other resources, is this question...

Am I OK?

When people are experiencing a headache or chest pain they take medication or see a doctor - physical symptoms which prevent more serious problems

The same approach should be used with mental health.

For example, at times I get a bit agitated and stressed.

At such times I ask myself, "Am I ok?" and I can tell myself to take a few deep breaths, go for a walk, etc

That encouraging people to be more AWARE would be a very effective prevention tool...

On that same theme, when it comes to any/all M.H issues, what I've found very effective, and I hope and pray it is implemented, is

- (1) Aware - be aware of the issue/problem, such as Anxiety
- (2) Understanding - read (the person) all about the issue so you know what you're dealing with and it makes it easier to deal with
- (3) support - through counsellors, therapists, psychologists, etc. so you know you're not alone in dealing with this issue (if possible friends and family can help)
- (4) Hard work - you can overcome, or at least deal with the issue, if you put in the hard work
- (5) Belief - If you believe you can beat the issue, you can. If you say you never will, you never will...

RELEASE

One way to prevent mental health issues getting out of control, especially anger and depression and violence, even suicide, is

Release - find ways to release what's going on in your mind - through journaling / writing in a book

what's going on in your mind - let it all out!

It doesn't matter if you write 10 pages on why you hate someone - it saves you actually acting on that hate by calling them names or hitting them.

You could also try gardening - or sport - even throwing a rubber ball against a wall - or pulling faces in front of a mirror - or by laughing out really loud

(laughter therapy has been proven to be effective)

Journaling also helps the sleep process.

MENTAL HEALTH OF THE ELDERLY

This has been severely impacted by the covid crisis;

so many residents in aged care facilities, already suffering from lack of basic rights and dignity, have been depressed, suicidal, frustrated - trapped where they live

* I hope and pray your committee doesn't ignore the elderly.

Their sense of freedom, of dignity, of peace, psychological and physical health needs to be strongly considered

(Again I have some suggestions and knowledge to pass onto you / discuss with you, if you're interested -)

In Summary

As you can tell by now, I've put a lot of hard work into this submission.

As you would have read, I went through hell, my life was stolen from me, emotional numbness, PTSD, reliving the trauma.

I've worked so hard to get to where I am now.

I understand more than just about anyone to be honest, what it's like to attempt suicide, experience anxiety, depression, anger, (even self-harm), addictions (I was a gambling addict for 5 years), family negligence, grief, and be counselled/treated/supported

And

to now support and encourage and counsel others.

I was a ~~winner~~. ~~LOSER~~. Now I am a WINNER!

There is so much more to add, such as the impact of the media on mental health,

but I've given you enough for now!

The key word of this whole submission of mine is:

PREVENTION - if my suggestions are implemented, through discussion/consultation with you, mental health can become much less of an issue than it now is.

Please reply, because, by working together, with our combined insights, experience and knowledge, we can make one hell of a difference!

Yours faithfully

David Jarvis

15

As the following 2 pages relate to my experience of National Apology Day

THE GREATEST DAY OF MY LIFE

My falsity stung me like a hornet as I realised I was not alone.
 My facade was removed. I was stripped to raw bone.
 It was October 22, 2018, National Apology Day
 The greatest day of my life... that's what I'll always say.

When I was 17 I was sexually assaulted and tortured at an institution. ^{effect} The result: my body, mind and emotions were beyond repair.

The perpetrators, those who condoned it, those who ignored it, including my family, simply did not care.

The after effects ruined my life for over 40 years.
 I was emotionally numb. There were no such thing as 'tears'

In 2014 I finally told someone of what happened to me.
 Tears flowed at last, yes! It was a start. You'll soon see.
 People said I really do need to speak out
 But as I was afraid to look anyone in the face, I did have some self doubt.

I received help from counsellors. I studied counselling too!
 Receiving a diploma in counselling was a special gift come true.
 More and more people said, "as painful as it will be, you must speak out"
 I had to relive the horror at the institution where I was abused,
 where someone died last year, in graphic detail, both in written words
 and verbally, for the Royal Commission, for the police, for the Redress
 scheme. Reliving that trauma got too much at times. Many times I went to
 bed hoping I don't wake up in the morning. I thought, "Is this what
 life is all about?"

When my name was drawn out of a ballot to be one of the 400 chosen
 ones to represent at least 60,000 individuals who suffered sexual
 abuse at institutions, to go down to Canberra for National Apology Day,
 I felt so lucky.

Flying down to Canberra was scary to the ~~least~~ say the least.
 How would I cope being with other survivors of institutional sexual
 abuse? Could I cope? Maybe I'd end up deceased?

I met some of my fellow survivors at the hotel. Reality hit hard.
 I was not the only one who had suffered. We'd all been scarred.

We spoke. We hugged. There was no falsity, no facade
 We cried. We were together in a special bond. It was hard.

Come next day, October 22. THE day had come!
 At breakfast I cried. I stumbled outside. I felt so dumb.
 A lovely lady, Sharon, put her arms around me. Others did too
 My tears didn't disappear. If anything they grew.
 I put my arms around others who were also in pain.
 I thought, "Why am I suffering in Canberra?! I'd rather be in Spain!"

The bus came and took us to Parliament House.
 What an awesome sight! It made me as quiet as a church mouse!
 Eventually we were escorted inside.
 Under our chairs were tissues. We needed them. There was nowhere to hide.
 The speeches by Scott Morrison and Bill Shorten were fantastic, the best I've ever heard.
 They were spoken with such sincerity, conviction and quality by real, wonderful
 people, that we were all affected deeply. Anyone who doesn't think Scott
 and Bill are special human beings, truly is absurd.
 At one point the Chairman of the Apology Day held up the hand of Scott on
 one side, with Bill on the other.
 They told us to stand up and do the same. We put our hands, our love, our
 warmth, our healing, onto the people both sides of us.
 We cried. We all cried. It was a feeling like no other.
 When the prime minister spoke about those who were raped by priests
 and then made to confess to the same priests for their 'sins' I felt
 intense guilt because my trauma was not as bad as others. I dropped my
 head onto my knees and cried.
 Someone, Liz, rested her head on my shoulder. I put my arm around her.
 Because I've never had anyone tell me they love me and I've never kissed
 anyone, this was so beautiful, the nearest I've come to love in my
 life, to have Liz there, by my side.
 Later on I shook the hands of Scott and Bill. I'm so proud of that.
 Overwhelmed, overcome by emotion, leaving the building, I collapsed onto the floor.
 I was helped up, only to fall again outside, till someone sat beside me on a mat.
 We spoke, he took me to a chair, fed me as I cried. My life was an open door.
 I got up, tied a ribbon onto a ceremonial tree and gave it a hug and a kiss.
 I wrote thankful words in a commemorative book. It was an occasion I could not miss.
 I placed my hands in the moat as a way of somehow cleansing the
 trauma of my past.
 I placed them in again as a way of looking to the future with my hands,
 body, mind and soul all 'purified'. Let's hope that will last.
 Later, back at the hotel, some cried alone in their rooms. I had to be
 with others.
 We exchanged contact details, stories of our trauma, embraces and
 love with new found 'sisters and brothers'.
 After I flew home the next day, overwhelmed, I cried for two more hours.
 Then I realised I have a duty to use all my strength and powers.
 My powers to make sure that those responsible for sexual abuse in
 institutions, those who condoned it, those who ignored it, and the institutions
 themselves, must be made accountable. They will pay the price.
 Now is the time for action and to treat each other with love and respect.
 Sexual abuse in institutions, or in our homes is unacceptable.
 It is a crime, to be precise...

17

David Harris