
From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 3 February 2022 9:19 AM
To: Mental Health Select Committee
Subject: MHSC submission.

Hello MHSC

I wish to lodge a submission. This is based on my personal experiences.

I have been dealing with mental health issues for many years. My issues are severe anxiety (I struggle to leave the house, even now I haven't been to many public places such as shopping centres for 20 odd years), depression, OCD (can be so bad it's not unusual for me to have hours of my day/night taken up on rituals, even putting on clothing can take me an hour). I also have IBS which may be connected to my mental health issues or at least made worst by them.

I have found it ~extremely~ hard to get treatment. Before covid it was hard, with long waits to see a psychologist (which I personally have not found helpful) but now I would say it is now near impossible. Even getting to see a GP is a long wait (and I feel for anyone trying to access a new GP as many will not see new patients). My experience to see my GP is around 12 days which is not adequate when someone is in the grip of a mental health crisis. Or to be told by 1300 MH CALL to go to a hospital's emergency department. I personally would never do that, even when I feel completely overwhelmed because of both personal experience and stories of long waits (in crowded wait rooms), then being rushed through, ER staff not adequately trained in mental health, feeling judgement, being sent home without much help (I have been to Ipswich ED once and this was what I experienced too but for another matter although my mental health was briefly bought up after the doctor accessed my mygov health file. I could feel the judgemental and change of tone, not being taken seriously after my mental health issues were 'discovered').

The government run 1300 MH CALL (1300642255). I have tried to get help through this service MANY times but in the end I gave up. I am phone phobic (I find it hard to use the phone, comes back to my anxiety and finding it hard to mix with people in general). Finally a social worker gave me an email address to contact them via email. Initially they did respond and seem like they were going to help. They even offered to have me assessed by a doctor. However, when I replied to accept the offer of being assessed it obviously went to someone else who told me they were administration only and to ring the 1300MHCALL number. I replied and explained the situation (they could access the previous emails as all correspondence was within the email) and the person who replied this time seemed helpful however when I replied again, it must of went to someone else again and this person was like the other one who tried to palm me off and this thing where one reply would seem helpful, the next not went on and in the end it went nowhere and even though I continued to sent a few more follow up emails (and even supplied my phone number as I wanted help), I never received another reply or a phone call or anything and their offer of helping me turned out to be false hope and went nowhere which can affect people like me who find it hard to reach out for help and tell their mental health struggles. It was at this point that I realised how hard getting help really is and I haven't tried since.

I just read the 1300 MH CALL reviews (after googling to get their phone number for this submission) and sadly I can see I am not alone in my disappointment with trying to access help through them.

In my opinion, telling people with mental health issues, especially those with significant, life affecting issues to contact Lifeline is upsetting. Although they mean well, the 'counsellors' are volunteers who from my understanding have done a few weeks training. My experience with them was they made me feel worse and afterwards I felt so alone and burst into tears (although a good cry can sometimes briefly help :-). I have also emailed them through their website on quite a few occasions and only once received a reply, probably 6 weeks later and not helpful. That is my experience with Beyond Blue too. Both just advised to go to my GP or ring the 1300 MHCALL line. In fact, the more I have reached out, the more disappointed I have become because where is the help?

I would like to point out that my mental health issues are not drug or alcohol related so I don't have access to getting help through those services either.

Furthermore, it's not just the government's mental health services that is letting people down. I have been waiting for much needed dentals surgery through West Moreton for 3.5 years. Placed on a 2 year wait list with a abscess deep within a tooth canal (OPG diagnosed), it ended up eroding into jawbone and destroying this tooth and the one next to it. Even a 'urgent referral' from my doctor, didn't help. After 2.5 years, I remade contact only to be told my name had been taken of the list a few months earlier because I didn't attend an appointment that a nurse rang me about (didn't happen). The OHO was unhelpful. West Moreton told them that 'moving forward we would like to offer [REDACTED] treatment. OHO accepted this and 'urged me to make contact with the dental clinic again'. After a while I did and was reassessed. Now I been waiting another 8 months on a second wait list with no treatment in near sight. This near constant head, jaw ear, lip, throat, chest pain, dizzy spells, etc does nothing for my mental health. Nor does knowing that four relatives, all with mild, non emergency issues made contact well after I did and all had treatment relatively quickly including a niece who had treatment very quickly - that should of been my appointment.

Overall, from my personal experience there is not adequate help for people with mental health. This was an issue before covid but much worst now. Long waits to see a GP, long waits to see a psychologist (I assume psychiatrist is the same), very hard to get help from the government's 1300 service, where does one go because it's not helpful to tell someone to go to the hospital ED? I would rather die than go through that again.

Some suggestions:-

- *An immediate review of the 1300 MHCALL service.

- *Allow people to email the 1300 MHCALL service as I am sure there are other people like me who struggle to talk to people (at least initially) and therefore may be missing out on help.

- *Do the hospital EDs rooms have specifically trained mental health staff available immediately, 24 hours a day? If I could present, knowing I could immediately request to see a mental health professional, I may consider it next time I feel like I am overwhelmed and don't want to be here anymore but right now I never would of my own free will. Same with the ambulance service. My experience was negative and quite judgemental there too although nicer than Ipswich ED.

- *Addressing other government department areas that people with mental health challenges may come into contact with such as my example with the public dental health system . A negative experience could cause lasting damage, physically as well as mentally, mistrust or even worse.

I don't know what else to add or even if my submission is what you are looking for but thank you for reading and allowing me to share my thoughts.

Thank you

Regards

[REDACTED]

(I request my name to be kept anonymous please).

Phone:- [REDACTED]