



## Mental health inquiry – draft report

# Factsheet: General Practitioners (GPs)

**General Practitioners (GPs) are the frontline service for most mental health care in urban and regional parts of Australia. GPs have a vital role in managing the overall health of patients with a mental illness and referring them for specialist treatment when needed.**

Many GPs involved in the Productivity Commission's Inquiry indicated they felt either overwhelmed or inadequately prepared to deal with mental health issues, and found it challenging to gather a full understanding of what services were available for patients.

GPs could be better supported in:

- Assessing consumers with mental health problems.
- Managing the side effects of mental health medications.
- Connecting patients into other services (such as online mental health services).

Consumers with mental ill-health would benefit from better co-ordination between GPs and other clinicians.

### The Productivity Commission's Inquiry makes a number of recommendations to address these issues:

- GPs should be funded (through Medicare) to create and maintain a single care plan for consumers with complex care needs.
- All GPs should have access to psychiatric advice over the phone (funded through Medicare) to help them manage their patients.
- Mental health referral pathways should be detailed online for all regions, for example through the HealthPathways platform.
- Introduce a continuing professional development course that educates GPs about best practice approaches to managing medications used to treat mental illness.
- The number of mental health nurses practicing in Australia – in GP clinics, community health services, and aged care facilities – should be significantly increased.

**1 in 8 Aust.**



1 in 8 visits to a GP are related to mental health.

**4 MILLION**

About 4 million people (15% of the population) receive a mental health related prescription from their GP in a year.

“ Consumers with mental ill-health would benefit from better co-ordination between GPs and other clinicians. ”



To see all of our recommendations and read our full draft report, or to access our other fact sheets please go to [www.pc.gov.au](http://www.pc.gov.au) or google search productivity commission mental health report.