



Media Statement – 31 October 2019

Peak body for suicide prevention welcomes Productivity Commission Mental Health draft report recommendations

Suicide Prevention Australia, the national peak body for suicide prevention, has said the Productivity Commission draft report on mental health released today is further evidence Governments must act now to relieve the burden of mental ill-health and suicide in our community.

The Productivity Commission's \$43-51 billion estimate of the cost of mental ill-health and suicide is alarming. It adds the economic dimension to the immense human cost of the lives affected by mental ill-health and suicide.

Suicide Prevention Australia CEO, Nieves Murray said, "We've been calling for major reform for some time.

"That's why our submission to the Productivity Commission focused on the need for a whole-of-government approach to suicide prevention.

"It doesn't make sense to have multiple systems and streams for mental health funding and oversight across Governments. This has led to a fragmented and often duplicative national system, and means the opportunity for collaborative strategies is lost," said Ms Murray.

Suicide Prevention Australia's submission called on the Commission to examine the way Governments work together and fund mental health and suicide prevention.

Ms Murray said, "We therefore welcome the Productivity Commission's call for a new National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement. This approach will bring together funding and greater collaboration on mental health between the Commonwealth and the jurisdictions.

"Giving the National Mental Health Commission independent oversight of whole-of-government suicide prevention and mental health programs will also provide the community with confidence that their efficacy and evidence-base is being rigorously monitored.

"Accurate, reliable, timely data on suicide prevention is absolutely critical if we're to reduce the rate of suicide.

"Australia has sophisticated data collection systems and vast information is already stored by multiple Government departments.

"We suggest the Commission advise Governments to harness these systems and bring information together so that we can target suicide prevention services where they're needed, monitor their success and – ultimately – save lives.



“Suicide is the second leading cause of death for young people aged between 15-24. We need greater investment in initiatives to help young people to confidently transition from school and begin adult life with good mental health and wellbeing,” said Ms Murray.

“We urge Governments and the sector to adopt the Commission’s call for greater investment in school-based early intervention programs.

“We also know that those who’ve made a first attempt at suicide are at greatest risk of attempting again, especially within six months of the attempt.

“People who have survived a suicide attempt are often given inadequate follow up, simply because our public health system is under pressure.

“Taking up the Commission’s proposals to close gaps in healthcare and follow up people who’ve survived suicide attempts means we’ll provide a continuum of care to people who need it most.

“We welcome the Commission’s recommendation for greater investment in housing so that the cycle of homelessness is broken.

“The availability of safe, secure housing is a key social determinant of mental health and we know homelessness is a risk factor for suicide.

“More needs to be done to address the other emerging social and economic factors that may affect mental health and wellbeing – and ultimately, the risk of suicide.

“As highlighted in our recent *Turning Points: imagine a world without suicide* white paper, the social disconnection and economic stressors emerging from gig economy, casualisation of employment and relationship breakdowns must be addressed if we’re to reduce the suicide rate.

“The Productivity Commission should consider these social and economic trends in its final report,” Ms Murray concluded

Further information

Turning Points:

https://www.suicidepreventionaust.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2019_Sept_SPA_Turning_Points_White_Paper.pdf

National Policy Platform:

<https://www.suicidepreventionaust.org/wp-content/uploads/bsk-pdf-manager/2019/05/Suicide-Prevention-Australia-National-Policy-Platform-April-2019-high-res.pdf>

Media Interviews:

Suicide Prevention Australia CEO, Nieves Murray is available for media interviews today.

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