

31 October 2019

Beyond Blue welcomes Productivity Commission's Mental Health Inquiry draft report

Beyond Blue has welcomed the Productivity Commission's Draft Report from its inquiry into Mental Health, particularly its emphasis on fundamental system and financing reform and the need for a greater focus on prevention and early intervention.

Beyond Blue Chair the Hon Julia Gillard AC commended the Commission for recognising the need for substantial change to the way Australia addresses mental health issues.

"The Productivity Commission has produced a thoughtful analysis on the need for sweeping structural reform to Australia's mental health system," Ms Gillard said.

"It recognises that governments and the sector must work together and get it right, not just for economic reasons, but for the millions of Australians who are managing mental health issues, and who are working to achieve their best possible mental health," she said.

"The Commission's message is clear – reform is complex but it is absolutely vital to the nation's social and economic future. It's not about brands or programs; it's about people and communities. As a sector we must come together and make the most of this opportunity to secure profound, positive change."

Beyond Blue CEO Georgie Harman agreed with the Commission's view there was a need for a major rethink of how mental health care was funded and coordinated.

"We can and must improve mental health care outcomes. We can and must reform funding arrangements and clarify once and for all the roles and responsibilities between governments," Ms Harman said.

"We can and must offer better coordination and integration of supports and services for people, families and communities."

Ms Harman said the focus on prevention, early intervention and supports that went beyond the mental health system were vital.

"The Commission recognises that the mental health system alone cannot adequately support Australia's mental health needs, which range from staying well to supporting those with intensive needs," she said.

"Many of the required supports need to come from outside the health system, from areas like housing, education, employment, and the justice system.

"With half of all mental health issues emerging by the age of 14, we strongly support the Commission's view that we must be doing more to support children, young people and their families.

"We must intervene early in life, but also early in illness and early in episode.

"And despite growing awareness and acceptance of mental health issues, stigma remains a barrier to help-seeking. This is why we must continue to encourage open discussions about mental health and support-seeking and keep working to improve public understanding of the signs and symptoms of these issues."

Beyond Blue will make further submissions to the inquiry.

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“We look forward to assessing the analysis and recommendations in detail as we prepare a further submission ahead of the Commission’s final report in May 2020,” Ms Harman said.

Mental health professionals are available at the Beyond Blue Support Service via phone 24/7 on 1300 22 4636 or via www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support for online chat (3PM – 12AM AEST or email responses within 24 hours).