

GROW Australia says Productivity Commission “about right” on mental health reform

One of Australia’s pioneering organisations in consumer-led mental health and suicide prevention today welcomed the Productivity Commission Draft Report on Mental Health as getting it “about right” on reform directions.

“It’s not perfect, it never will be even after the next round of consultations, but the directions proposed generally are what we need and the Productivity Commission now needs widespread support to ensure governments act on mental health reform,” David Butt, National CEO of GROW Australia, said today.

“Generally, the Commission has confirmed what has been said by many reports over a long period of time and what is largely known within the sector – what we’ve had has been a failure to act, a failure to invest, implement and execute.

“It’s those next steps we need to get right when the final report comes out and we need to do it together.”

Established in 1957 and operating throughout Australia, GROW is a pioneer in consumer-led models of self-help, peer support, and recovery, and is credited with assisting tens of thousands of Australians. The organisation also has expanded into new areas of mutual support, including Get Growing in schools, eGrow online, and prisons and carers programs.

Mr Butt welcomed the Commission’s recognition of the role of peer support and peer workers in prevention, early intervention and recovery and noted the importance of significant expansion of community based mental health care as essential to improving access and creating a joined-up system.

“Non-government organisations with a focus on peer support are well placed to provide services which achieve directions being pursued by the Commission, such as alternatives to Emergency Departments and keeping people well and thriving in the community, as well as in the provision of non-acute beds.

“We also support the proposals for better development of integrated care pathways and care plans, including online navigation platforms but note again that this needs to go beyond clinical providers and the public sector to include the extensive services and supports provided by the NGO sector.”

Mr Butt said GROW strongly supported the Commission’s prioritisation of prevention and early intervention, particularly in schools.

“There are many services available for schools to support children and adolescents, particularly vulnerable children, but there needs to be stronger pathways between schools and those services – schoolteachers play a vital role but should not have to do it all themselves.”

Mr Butt said GROW would be responding to the draft report and participating in the consultations.

“We’ll identify areas where we think there could be improvements in the final report, but overall we’ll be offering our support to get on with it, invest and implement – I don’t expect anyone is likely to agree with everything in the final report but I expect virtually everyone will agree with much of what it recommends.”

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