

Mr Mark Scott AO
Managing Director of the ABC
GPO Box 9994
Sydney NSW 2001

14 October 2014

Dear Mr Scott

Last week the ABC changed the way Australia talked about mental health.

Firstly, the ABC shone a light on an area of public policy that has struggled in the darkness for too long.

One in five Australians experience a mental illness every year, almost half of us over the course of a lifetime. And yet we know those who experience mental illness are still not provided with the same level of care they would if they experienced so many other health conditions.

We must overcome this discrepancy, and the ABC has advanced this effort considerably.

Secondly, the ABC gathered others to our conversation, and allowed their stories to be told.

The simple fact that I would struggle to summarise the breadth of ABC programming over the past week suggests just how wildly successful the ABC was in sharing the stories of Australians who experience mental illness.

But the week did so much more than this. The ABC Mental As platform gave all of us working in the mental health sector the chance to campaign and to tell our own stories. This “multiplier effect” is hard to measure but its importance cannot be overstated.

Finally, the ABC matched its intelligent exploration of sometimes difficult and important issues with a considerable degree of wit, humour and humanity. This too played an important role reflecting the everyday humanity of those who experience mental illness on a day to day basis, and those who provide care and support.

Mental Health Australia was delighted to part of the week, from conversations during the initial stages, to our involvement in Felicity Ward’s Mental Mission (which had a very positive impact on our World Mental Health Day Campaign – *Mental Health Begins with Me!*).

Mental health is an everyday concern for many of us, but stigma and discrimination mean our concerns are hidden away. Against this backdrop, I congratulate the ABC for displaying the courage needed to take on this theme, and for its professionalism in representing mental health so sensitively.



The ABC led the country in an important discussion last week, and we are profoundly grateful for what was achieved.

We also know that there is much to do. We stand ready to assist the ABC in promoting such discussions in future and we hope that you will consider making this an annual event to coincide with National Mental Health Week – at least until such time as we have together overcome the misunderstanding, fear, stigma and discrimination that too often characterises our thinking on mental health.

Congratulations.

Please pass on our gratitude to all those who worked so hard behind the scenes to make the Mental As campaign such a success.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jennifer Westacott', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jennifer Westacott
Chair

