

Productivity Commission Mental Health

5th April 2019

To whom it may concern,

I make this submission as a concerned citizen and taxpayer who would like to see clearly what the tangible benefits and results are of the billions of dollars spent in the area of Mental Health. Where is the accountability for the spending of this money? If this were effective use of money, would we not be seeing a decline in the numbers of people with these problems? This appears to not be the case as we are told that the numbers continue to increase.

Prevention and early intervention/Youth mental health

This area is of utmost concern to me as often what can be deemed as 'mental illness' in young people and children is actually on a normal spectrum and will, with time or non pharmaceutical methods, reduce and not be present at a later time.

Nearly 5,000 Australian children aged two to six are on the ADHD drug methylphenidate (Ritalin, Concerta) while the TGA has not approved its use for those younger than six. Do these children really require such an intervention? Could we be funding alternatives that have more effective and less harmful results?

More than 49,000 children aged 2-16 are on antidepressants, although the TGA does not authorize antidepressant use in depression in those under 18. Again, is this spending on pharmaceuticals a necessary intervention?

There are now 67 psychiatric drug warnings issued by Australia's drug regulatory agency. These include to warn of the risk of hallucinations, increased blood pressure, agitation, akathisia (inability to remain motionless), aggression, life threatening heart problems, addiction, suicidal ideation and possible death. These do not seem to be something that should be so freely prescribed and funded. What kind of results are being truly obtained with these pharmaceuticals?

It does not make economic sense to increase funding where a lack of improvement and ineffective solutions are present. I look forward to a thorough examination of how this spending is justified in this day and time.

Regards,

Deborah Garden