

22 Jan 2020

To: The Productivity Commissioners,
Productivity Commission Inquiry into Mental Health

Dear Sirs,

I have previously made a submission regarding this Inquiry, however, I may have had some incorrect data interpretation regarding the draft report you have released.

For this reason, I am submitting again with a clarified viewpoint.

As a member of an extended family and as an occasional carer of a mentally ill person I am greatly concerned with the Commission planning to expand screening to include "Children's social and emotional development before they enter pre-school".

I am also greatly concerned with the Commission using as a point of reference in its Draft Report, "Zero to Three", an organisation relying on the manual: "Diagnostic Classification of Mental Health and Developmental Disorders in Infancy and Early Childhood".

This has in its guidelines for "Disorders of Infancy and Early Childhood" that "difficulty sleeping; tantrums; losing track of a favourite stuffed animal and hyperactivity" are symptomatic of mental health disorders.

As these are normal behaviour of healthy growing children who may be tired or hungry or simply have had too much sugar that day, it points to a willingness to diagnose and classify every child as having a mental disorder requiring medical intervention.

This of course is a ludicrous situation and I could be accused of being paranoid or dramatizing, were it not for my own experience within my own family, of an over readiness to diagnose and treat with psychotropic drugs. This creates a far worse situation than the perceived mental disorder in the first place.

Further from my own experience, there IS a willingness by the Pharmaceutical Industry in association with practitioners to prescribe drugs, including dangerous psychotropic drugs, without proper medical testing and with remarkably little evidence of need.

Evidence of the Pharmaceutical Industry being primarily profit driven would fill a larger volume than this submission could include.

There is also another issue I have contention with in your Draft Report and it is as follows:

As a Productivity Commission carrying out an Inquiry, I would have thought that you would indeed be looking at the very large funding level for Mental Health with a correspondingly low success rate in treating or preventing mental health in our community. An example of this wastage could be seen in the "Healthy Kids Check" for screening 3-5 year olds which was funded by the Government and attracted much criticism both here in Australia and

overseas as being a “vast and untried public health experiment that will almost surely cause more harm to children than it prevents”. This from a Psychiatrist of some renown. It is my understanding that funding for this was withdrawn, indicating a lack of productivity in this field.

The dangers of prescribing psychotropic drugs without proper or thorough investigation of a child’s behaviour cannot be overstated. Within my own family, there was a teenage boy who, while his father was overseas with the Royal Australian Navy, was screened at school and diagnosed as having a potential mental disorder, simply because as a growing early teen he was demonstrating his high intelligence and forthright personality by standing up to what he saw as his teacher not doing the right thing by his class.

This boy who is now 20, was planning to become a pilot in RAAF. However, he was put on a psychotropic drug without agreement from his parents which put him into a vegetative state compared to his earlier exuberance of life.

Within two weeks, his mother, a hospital worker took him off the medication and he recovered his normal drive. Subsequently he started his private flying training and was then told that he had no future as a pilot for life due to having been diagnosed as having a disorder and for being prescribed the drug.

A youth looking forward to a wonderful future, relegated to an aimless attempt to find something in life he can be passionate about.

I feel very strongly about proposals to screen very young children and my experience sadly shows that I have good grounds to be concerned that abuse *will* occur and children *will* be harmed.

We Australians trust a Productivity Commission Inquiry to protect us from both profit motivated Pharmaceutical companies and poorly planned mental health programs. The history of these is cause for much alarm and much scrutiny.

Yours Sincerely and Thank You for your work,

Peter Clement