

Dear Commissioners

I wish to respond to the proposal under Reform area 1: **prevention and early intervention for mental illness and suicide attempts** - “Consistent screening of social and emotional development should be included in existing early childhood physical development checks to enable early intervention.”

I have concerns about the nature of the “screening”. Presumably this will be done as it has been before – by means of a checklist of behaviours which might point to the onset of mental illness.

The validity of such a checklist in determining a need for intervention is the first concern. I have seen many normal childhood behaviours, such as difficulty sitting still, fidgeting, etc. listed on ADHD checklists before.

While mental illness is usually attributed to a ‘chemical imbalance in the brain’ diagnosis does not require any medical test to determine this. Furthermore, were such a medical test to be conducted, caution would be advised in assuming that the presence of an extraordinary amount of a certain chemical indicated causality. Dr Mary Ann Block has written some informative texts on the correlation between physical conditions and apparent mental illness and has successfully treated both by first conducting thorough medical tests to identify allergies, hormone imbalances and nutritional deficiencies and then addressing the physical causes.

The second concern is the “early intervention for mental illness and suicide attempts” and the nature of this intervention. The most likely intervention, according to my observation, is medication. The irony is that the most alarming side effect of any number of such medications is in fact suicidal thoughts or tendencies. I have witnessed this side effect in my own extended family.

Most concerning of all is the proposal that screening be conducted on 0 to 3 year olds, who cannot even speak for themselves. Whether or not the stated intention of this proposal is to medicate children of this age, the fact is that children of this age are already medicated for mental illness in Australia. This could be considered farcical, were it not so disturbing.

How about an inquiry into these abuses of medication and children, instead of creating systems which will make such abuses more widespread and easier to perpetrate?

Thank you for your attention.

Ryan Bysshe