



The National Heart Patients Support Organisation

HEART SUPPORT-AUSTRALIA LTD ABN 34 008 629 221

Productivity Commission Inquiry into Mental Health – The social and economic benefits of improving Mental Health

Submission by Heart Support Australia Ltd
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Heart Support Australia (HS-A) is a Federally Funded Not for Profit organisation that has been providing peer support programs and services for over 29 years to health consumers and their carers who have experienced a cardiac event. HS-A works as a partner in health to address the modifiable risk factors with individuals as they navigate their journey to achieve a positive health outcome and a healthy, productive life after a cardiac event. HS-A's mandate is to inhibit the occurrence of a second cardiac event due to stress and/or depression

It has been clearly demonstrated in overseas studies that peer support programs are a valued tool in the patient journey to a positive health outcome. It has also been documented in Australia that when an individual experience a health crisis (Mental health or other) the support services provided in the transition period between hospital and the home environment can be confusing, costly, un available in the local community, have criteria limitations and in some cases just nonexistent.

Currently HS-A is the only organisation that provides a research-based peer support program to support cardiac survivors when they return to their home environment.

The scope of the challenges organisations such as Mental Health Australia face in addressing the diverse issues that are represented under the umbrella of "Mental Health" in Australia is staggering and I do not propose to address each one in this submission. HS-A would like to acknowledge the great work Mental Health Australia and other organisations do under the current system we have in place.

HS-A would like to submit today that under every category of Mental Health issue to be addressed through the process of this productivity commission, in the development of the frame work to address each critical area there must be a peer support strategy implemented. Research based peer support programs are a life time support mechanism that if developed correctly has the ability to provide measurable health outcome improvements. Also, economic benefits by way of reduction in Hospital admissions, engaged doctor visits, positive re-engagement with society and improved workplace productivity and culture

The productivity commission must consider the value of a peer support strategy in addressing the effectiveness of current programs and initiatives across all jurisdictions to improve mental health, suicide prevention and participation, including by governments, employers and professional groups

Amy Squires
CEO
Heart Support Australia