

## Response to the 'Productivity Commission on Mental Health' Draft Report

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your 'Mental Health' draft report.

As a parent and an employee in the education sector, I have great concern with some of the proposals of this draft in relation to the screening for 'mental illnesses in children, including babies and toddlers.

- While medical disease can be screened for and verified, there are no valid tests to confirm any psychiatric diagnosis.
- The screening questions asked are so subjective that any child could be at risk of being labelled mentally ill and potentially recommended for a prescription of psychiatric drugs.
- Psychiatrists cannot predict future mental illness ("emerging mental illness") by the use of an arbitrary list of questions on a checklist.
- Symptoms for so called psychiatric disorders for 0 to 3 year olds include: Irregular feeding patterns, difficulty sleeping, whining, crying, calling for absent parent, temper tantrums, shyness and hyperactivity.  
How can we honestly label any one of these as symptoms of emerging mental illness? These are common and normal things that occur. We need to be providing more real support and education to parents.
- The statistics are proof that our current 'Mental Health' system is failing. The statistics are going backwards. More and more people are being diagnosed, more and more money is being spent, more and more drugs are being pushed but the statistics of 'mental health' issues are getting worse.
- In 2007/08, 201 children aged under 3 on antidepressants, of which 48 were younger than 1 year old. 59 children aged under 3 on antipsychotics, with 5 younger than 1. 46 children aged under 3 on ADHD drugs
- In 2015, there were children aged 2-6 years old on antidepressants, antipsychotics and ADHD drugs. (4,974 on ADHD drugs, 1,459 on antidepressants and 1,349 on antipsychotics). Interestingly, the Department of Health no longer provides the numbers of children on psychiatric drugs by age, under 6.

There is no doubt that children and adults get depressed, anxious or even act psychotic. But our Doctors, health care professionals and society as a whole are being marketed to and sold by Psychiatrists and Pharmaceutical Companies that these are an illness, instead of feelings and emotions. The issue is how they are helped. They should be given holistic, humane care that improves their condition. Key is finding the cause of the problem which can vary greatly for each person and rectifying this. Proper medical tests can determine if there is an undiagnosed and untreated medical condition manifesting as a "psychiatric disorder." Medical doctors also recommend a good diet, sufficient sleep and exercise. Institutions should be quiet, safe havens where adults and children voluntarily seek help without fear of indefinite incarceration and terrifying treatment. They need places where they can get workable and accountable help for their problems.

The existing money spent needs to be re-directed into proven workable solutions. Labelling and drugging our children is not a proven or workable solution.