

23 January 2020

Australian Government Productivity Commission
Department of the Treasury
MELBOURNE, VICTORIA 3000

Re: Shared Value Project submission - Productivity Commission 2019, Mental Health, Draft Report

Dear Commissioners,

I refer you to the attached report, which builds on your acknowledgement of the dual social and economic impact of mental ill-health by outlining the business imperative to proactively address this issue.

I make this submission on behalf of the Shared Value Project member network, a corporate community of practice aimed at enhancing the competitiveness of companies while improving social and environmental conditions in the regions where they operate.

As noted in the Commission's draft report, mental ill-health costs the national economy more than \$50 billion per year. For corporations, the cost of lost wages, decreased productivity and support services related to mental health amounts to \$13 billion. As the problem grows, and public resources continue to be strained, this poses a long-term risk to business and economic prosperity in Australia.

The aforementioned research, *Creating Shared Value: The Business Imperative to Improve Mental Health in Australia*, demonstrates how corporate resources, skills and innovation can be leveraged to reduce the root cause of the issue whilst building economic resilience. This urgent risk mitigation is explained through the lens of shared value, a business strategy designed to solve social issues profitably.

The Commission also notes an increased business focus on supporting staff in times of need, through Employee Assistance Programs or similar. However, this research recognises that greater socio-economic progress can be achieved when business pushes beyond employees to strengthen the mental health of *all* stakeholders – including customers and local communities – by increasing economic participation and employment.

The fundamental shift to a more productive and resilient economy requires leadership and collaboration between Government, business and not-for-profits. The shared value community recognises the role of Govt as a regulator and convenor and would like to offer support in leveraging its power to drive Australia towards a more sustainable future. The attached report was launched by Victorian Minister for Mental Health, Martin Foley MP, to more than 150 business and community representatives in October 2019.

I encourage you to take this research into consideration, and welcome further engagement moving forward. In the words of Commissioner for the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, Allan Fels; who contributed the report Foreword, 'it is going to take a disruptive strategy like shared value to make the headway needed on this pervasive issue'.

Yours faithfully,

Helen Steel

CEO, Shared Value Project

Contact:

Helen Steel

Please note that given the inherent correlation between mental and financial health, the report focuses on the financial services industry; though its principles can be applied to other sectors.

About the Shared Value Project

Established in 2014, the Shared Value Project (SVP) is the peak body for advancing the adoption of shared value in the Asia Pacific; as part of a growing global network.

A membership-based organisation, SVP aims to build the capacity of business to solve the region's most prevalent issues profitably; ranging from mental ill-health to climate action, sustainable employment, financial inclusion and community resilience.

Today, SVP has built an influential corporate network, with more than 40 member organisations across 10 diverse industries. This includes NAB, IAG, AIA Australia, PwC Australia, Optus, BD and Enel Green Power. Through education, events and evidentiary support, we are committed to supporting a more sustainable future for business.