

12 January '20

Dear Commissioners

I am writing regarding the Productivity Commission's Mental Health Inquiry.

As a taxpayer and citizen of Australia, I would like to raise an objection to the proposed screening of children aged 0-3 years for mental illness. I believe this is a violation of basic human rights, as it opens the door to drugging of people who cannot speak for themselves or make informed choices about what they consume.

The side effects of psychiatric drugs include depression, violence, suicide and a host of other unacceptable outcomes. In my previous experience as a primary school teacher, I witnessed a perfectly sweet child turn into a violent and uncontrollable one - throwing chairs and attacking the teacher - as a result of his being prescribed Ritalin and other psychiatric drugs. Another sweet child who had been on Ritalin for over a year was like a zombie and emaciated due to the effect on his appetite.

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What concerns me further is that diagnosis is based not on medical tests (bloodwork, scans, physical examinations) but on subjective checklists - one of which I was required to complete as a teacher. The 'symptoms' included on the checklist included a range of normal childhood behaviours - most children have a short attention span and abundant energy & are therefore challenged when required to sit still.

I believe that making such checklists part of routine health checks would result in an unprecedented number of prescriptions of drugs which have far more detrimental than beneficial effects. I object strenuously.

Thank you for your attention.

Shannon Szabo