

Joint Mental Health Commissions' Submission to the Productivity Commission's Draft Mental Health Report - January 2020

The National, state and territory Mental Health Commissions (the Mental Health Commissions) have agreed to provide a joint submission to the Productivity Commission on their Draft Report on Mental Health. This submission is in addition to other submissions individual Mental Health Commissions may decide to undertake.

This joint submission concerns the recommendations the Draft Report makes regarding the role of the National Mental Health Commission (NMHC) and provides joint recommendations about the role of National, state and territory Mental Health Commissions.

State and Territory Mental Health Commissions

Currently there is a National Mental Health Commission; Mental Health Commissions in New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia, Queensland, an Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Australian Capital Territory and a Mental Health Complaints Commissioner in Victoria. There is no mental health commission in the Northern Territory or Tasmania and in Victoria, the office differs from the other state and territory Mental Health Commissions by being specifically a mental health complaints commissioner, as well as having an oversight role in recommending service and system improvements.

The Mental Health Commissions work collaboratively with each other on a range of projects and facilitate the NMHC meeting with their community stakeholders. This collegiate way of working is based on a joint Memorandum of Understanding and all parties recognise the innate usefulness of this collaboration, including biannual / triannual Commissioners' meetings.

Mental Health Commissions' Response to the Draft Recommendations

Information request 22.1 — Governance arrangements for the NMHC:

The Productivity Commission is seeking views on the form the National Mental Health Commission should take as an interjurisdictional statutory authority and the nature of its governance arrangements to enable it to effectively lead evaluations of mental health and suicide prevention programs funded by the Australian Government, State and Territory Governments, and other programs that have strong links with mental health outcomes, including those in non-health sectors.

Response from State and Territory Mental Health Commissions:

Generally, the Mental Health Commissions support the recommendation that the NMHC should become an independent statutory authority whose responsibilities include strategic national evaluation, monitoring and reporting.

The Mental Health Commissions agree that in order to support the role as proposed, the governance arrangements for the NMHC should have a skills based board, (including lived experience representatives), which acts to ensure that the NMHC fulfils its obligations. The Mental Health Commissions agree that the NMHC should be apolitical in terms of what it recommends, in alignment with its independent role.

The Mental Health Commissions support the National Mental Health Commission having an interjurisdictional role, noting that the scope of what this encompasses needs to be discussed to ensure no duplication with the existing work of state/territory Commissions.

Response from all Mental Health Commissions:

The Mental Health Commissions propose that existing state and territory commissions be retained, that all states and territories establish mental health commissions (or equivalence) and that consideration be given to having some common roles and responsibilities, including local monitoring and reporting. National, state and territory mental health commissions should work together to establish agreement on what is being measured so that a clear and consistent picture of mental health services development and reform is developed. This work can be undertaken independently of the outcomes of the Productivity Commission's report on mental health. It is also noted, that if regional commissioning authorities are established, their relationship with state/territory based Commissions will require further discussion.

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Australian Government
National Mental Health Commission



Government of **Western Australia**
Mental Health Commission



Mental Health Commission
of New South Wales



Queensland
Mental Health
Commission

The Office for
Mental Health
and Wellbeing



ACT
Government
Health



Government of South Australia
SA Mental Health Commission