

Dear Members of the Productivity Commission,

I am writing to you as a concerned member of the public in regards to the Mental Health Inquiry draft report.

In it is suggested that, starting now, mental health screenings should be added to the physical wellbeing checks for ages 0-3 years. This would mean several mental health screenings are done before the age of 3. While I acknowledge effort is being made to improve mental health for all Australians, my concern is based on the health professionals performing these physical wellbeing checks, while being well-trained in physiological conditions, are not qualified to screen for mental health conditions. Inevitably there will be an increase in false diagnoses, potentially and worryingly resulting in medicating an infant or toddler, one of our most vulnerable age groups.

The context with which the draft report is written is that nurses and educators in schools are not well-trained in mental health and are potentially missing mental health illness. Yet statistics contradict these claims. Each year the number of children on medications for mental illness reaches new highs. Where is the evidence that illness is being missed? A survey of educators on how they feel in regards to their training? That is no basis for implementing a nationwide mental health screening which could potentially worsen our over-medication problem. Overmedication is widely recognised as a public health problem but not even mentioned in this draft report.

This report includes wanting to use schools as a gateway to mental health services and suggest implementing a senior student wellbeing appointment. Yet in the report it is acknowledged that the educators are not well trained in mental health. Why would you put someone in charge of referring children to mental health services when it is acknowledged educators are not well-trained in mental health? Again another avenue for false diagnoses and more children on unnecessary medication.

Please consider my points raised and consider having a focus on the over-medicating of our children which is becoming increasingly prevalent. If this report is to fully encompass our children's mental health and general wellbeing this would be a priority.

Thank you for your attention.

Warm Regards,