

To: Mental Health Inquiry Productivity Commission

From: Lisa Kamaralli NSW

8 January 2020

Dear Commission,

After reading the October 2019 Mental Health Productivity Commission Draft Overview and Recommendations, I am concerned about some main key aspects of the report. These are the screening of babies and toddlers for mental health disorders, as there is no scientific tests or statistical data that would support the blanket screening and diagnosing of children at such an early age.

We already have a serious problem with Australian children being prescribed antidepressants. There were 101,174 children under 17 on antidepressants in 2017/18, a 34 % increase in just 4 years, despite the fact they are not approved for children under the age of 18 for depression. This is an alarming statistic and even more so when you factor in the noted side-effects of suicidal thoughts and actions, and that since 2008/09 suicides in young people have increased by almost 40%, concurrent with the use of antidepressants increasing approximately 60% in young people.

This statistic in itself shows that the with current system of screening, and diagnosing at early ages for mental illness has not improved the mental health of young people.

The thought of expanding an already failing system is abhorrent and a gross waste of tax payer's money. The Draft Report states, "Despite the rising expenditure on healthcare, there has been no clear indication that the mental health of the population has improved."

Why would continued funding and support of a failing system even be considered?

Sincerely yours,

Lisa Kamaralli