

Dear Commissioner/s,

I am deeply concerned as an Australian Citizen with a proposal to screen and treat babies and toddlers for mental illness.

I am an author, speaker, business owner and entrepreneur. I am also uncle to several independent and social nieces and nephews. I have a science degree and as such understand the scientific method. I also worked in the pharmaceutical industry for over a decade in sales and marketing roles so I know how to read scientific papers and research. I understand the difference between objective science and subjective assumptions.

There are several key things I want to communicate about this proposal:

1. There is no objective measurement of the brain or mind that can confirm chemical imbalance.
2. Proposed mental screening is based on incredibly subjective questions or observations
3. The drugs used to treat mental health are incredibly strong and powerful chemicals - many of which carry black box warnings both here and overseas because of the damaging side effects which can include thoughts about suicide.
4. There are several areas of these proposals which discuss the idea of 'preventing' mental illness by treating it before it occurs - this is abhorrent given the powerful nature of these chemicals.

Our children are the future of our society. We simply can't afford to use subjective observations of children - a wholly unscientific approach to medicine - as a basis of using powerful chemicals to control something that may or may not exist. I have seen first hand young and difficult children finding their way and becoming creative and stable adults once they matured. I've also seen the powerful and dramatic personality changes in children when placed on these harmful drugs.

The policy of 'first do no harm' is deeply rooted in western medicine and must be the yardstick by which we approach any medical interventions with children. Drugging them with powerful chemical in case they might have a mental illness is in itself quite insane.

Imagine if a drug cartel wanted to put these babies and children on powerful and illegal stimulants - we would be up in arms and throwing those criminals in jail.

Once someone becomes an adult, and there is undeniable proof of mental illness, it is a different story.

But this proposal seems quite beyond the pale to me.

Sir/s and Madam/s - I implore you to reject any proposal to screen babies and children - and avoid completely ignoring their basic human rights to care and a safe environment. I implore you to look very carefully at the details of this proposal and see for yourself the enormous gaps in proper diligent scientific method that exist in the approach which is recommended.

Thank you for considering my thoughts on this matter.

Yours sincerely

Hunter Leonard