

## **Productivity Commission issues paper**

The inquiry is investigating ways of improving the mental health of Australians so as to realise the benefits of increased economic participation and contribution to the community.

There are four specific streams of assessment:

- Consequences of mental ill-health
  - What it is costing individuals, their carers and Australia more broadly to forgo the participation and full contribution of those with mental ill-health
- Effectiveness and cost of current programs and supports
  - Effectiveness in improving mental health, preventing suicides, improving social and economic participation and contribution to wider community
  - Value-for-money of current programs and supports
- Gaps in current programs and supports available
  - Gaps in continuity of care for particular demographic groups (such as those with less severe or episodic mental ill-health)
- Likely effectiveness of alternative programs and supports
  - Improvements in outcomes possible and additional long-term benefits for particular consumer and carer groups and for Australia more broadly

The Issues Paper also includes a number of questions, designed to assist people in their responses. A full list of questions can be found in the **attachment**.

You will note when reading the attachment that questions are broken up by specific topics. For example, one of the topics is specific to housing and homelessness another is specific to government-funded employment support for people with mental ill-health. There may be member organisations that want to focus their feedback on those issues/topics which most closely relate to the services they provide.

These questions are there to guide organisations or individuals in their response. QAMH will be providing a submission and will look to address as many of the questions as possible, with our major focus on addressing each of the four key streams listed above.

If anyone has any questions about this process, or would like to be involved in the policy working group related to this inquiry, they should contact Jacklyn Whybrow – [jwhybrow@qamh.org.au](mailto:jwhybrow@qamh.org.au).

## **ATTACHMENT**

List of questions in the Productivity Commission's Mental Health Inquiry [Issues Paper](#)

### **QUESTIONS ON ASSESSMENT APPROACH**

- What suggestions, if any, do you have on the Commission's proposed assessment approach for the inquiry? Please provide any data or other evidence that could be used to inform the assessment.

### ***From Section 3. Contributing components to improving mental health and wellbeing***

#### **QUESTIONS ON STRUCTURAL WEAKNESSES IN HEALTHCARE**

- Why have past reform efforts by governments over many years had limited effectiveness in removing the structural weaknesses in healthcare for people with a mental illness? How would you overcome the barriers which governments have faced in implementing effective reforms?
- What, if any, structural weaknesses in healthcare are not being targeted by the most recent and foreshadowed reforms by governments? How should they be addressed and what would be the improvements in population mental health, participation and productivity?

#### **QUESTIONS ON SPECIFIC HEALTH CONCERNS**

- Should there be any changes to mental illness prevention and early intervention by healthcare providers? If so, what changes do you propose and to what extent would this reduce the prevalence and/or severity of mental illness? What is the supporting evidence and what would be some of the other benefits and costs?
- Which forms of mental health promotion are effective in improving population mental health in either the short or longer term? What evidence supports this?
- What changes do you recommend to healthcare to address the specific issues of suicides and comorbidities among people with a mental illness? What evidence is there to support your suggested actions and what types of improvements would you expect in terms of population mental health, participation and productivity?
- What healthcare reforms do you propose to address other specific health concerns related to mental ill-health? What is the supporting evidence and what would be some of the benefits and costs?
- What overseas practices for supporting mental health and reducing suicide and comorbidities should be considered for Australia? Why? Is there formal evidence of the success of these practices, such as an independent evaluation?

#### **QUESTIONS ON HEALTH WORKFORCE AND INFORMAL CARERS**

- Does the configuration and capabilities of the professional health workforce need to change to improve where and how care is delivered? If so, how should the workforce differ from current arrangements? How would this improve population mental health, participation and productivity?

- What can be done to address health workforce shortages in regional and remote areas? In which areas or circumstances would greater use of technology and tele-health services be suitable? What prevents greater remote provision of services to address the shortages?
- What restrictions exist on the scope of practice for different professions, such as GPs, nurses, clinical versus other psychologists, and social workers? Are these restrictions unwarranted and, if so, how could they be addressed and what would be some of the costs and benefits? • What could be done to reduce stress and turnover among mental health workers?
- How could training and continuing professional development be improved for health professionals and peer workers caring for people with a mental illness? What can be done to increase its take up?
- What changes should be made to how informal carers are supported (other than financially) to carry out their role? What would be some of the benefits and costs, including in terms of the mental health, participation and productivity of informal carers and the people they care for?

### **QUESTIONS ON HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS**

- What approaches can governments at all levels and non-government organisations adopt to improve:
  - support for people experiencing mental illness to prevent and respond to homelessness and accommodation instability?
  - integration between services for housing, homelessness and mental health?
  - housing support for people experiencing mental illness who are discharged from institutions, such as hospitals or correctional facilities?
  - flexibility of social housing to respond to the needs of people experiencing mental illness?
  - other areas of the housing system to improve mental health outcomes?
- What evidence can we draw on to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of approaches to housing and homelessness for those with mental ill-health?
- What overseas practices for improving the housing stability of those with mental illness should be considered for Australia? Why? Is there formal evidence of the success of these practices, such as an independent evaluation?

### **QUESTIONS ON SOCIAL SERVICES**

- How could non-clinical mental health support services be better coordinated with clinical mental health services?
- Are there significant service gaps for people with psychosocial disability who do not qualify for the NDIS? If so, what are they?
- What continuity of support are State and Territory Governments providing (or plan to provide) for people with a psychosocial disability who are ineligible for the NDIS?
- Are the disability support pension, carer payment and carer allowance providing income support to those people with a mental illness, and their carers, who most need support? If not, what changes are needed?
- Is there evidence that mental illness-related income support payments reduce the propensity of some recipients to seek employment?
- How could mental illness-related income support payments better meet the needs of people whose capacity to work fluctuates over time?

## **QUESTIONS ON SOCIAL PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION**

- In what ways are governments (at any level) seeking to improve mental health by encouraging social participation and inclusion? What evidence is there that public investments in social participation and inclusion are delivering benefits that outweigh the costs?
- What role do non-government organisations play in supporting mental health through social inclusion and participation, and what more should they do?
- Are there particular population sub-groups that are more at risk of mental ill-health due to inadequate social participation and inclusion? What, if anything, should be done to specifically target those groups?
- What indicators are most useful to monitor progress in improving mental health outcomes through improved social participation and inclusion?

## **QUESTIONS ON JUSTICE**

- What mental health supports earlier in life are most effective in reducing contact with the justice system?
- To what extent does inadequate identification of mental health and individual needs in different parts of the justice system increase the likelihood, and extent, of peoples' future interactions with that system?
- Where are the gaps in mental health services for people in the justice system including while incarcerated?
- What interventions in the justice system most effectively reduce the likelihood of re-offending, improve mental health and increase prospects for re-establishing contributing lives? What evidence is there about the long-term benefits and costs of these interventions?
- What are the main barriers to lowering the over-representation of people living with a mental illness in the justice system and what strategies would best overcome them?
- To what extent do inconsistent approaches across states and territories lead to inefficient, ineffective or inequitable outcomes for offenders and their families?

## **QUESTIONS ON CHILD SAFETY**

- What aspects of the child protection programs administered by the Australian, State and Territory Governments are the most effective in improving the mental health of people in contact with the child protection system?
- What, if any, alternative approaches to child protection would achieve better mental health outcomes?

## **QUESTIONS ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

- What are the key barriers to children and young people with mental ill-health participating and engaging in education and training, and achieving good education outcomes?
- Is there adequate support available for children and young people with mental ill-health to re-engage with education and training?
- Do students in all levels of education and training have access to adequate mental health-related support and education? If not, what are the gaps?
- How effective are mental health-related supports and programs in Australian education and training settings in providing support to students? How effective are programs in educating

staff, students and families, on mental health and wellbeing? What interventions are most effective? What evidence exists to support your assessment?

- Do teachers and other staff in schools and education facilities receive sufficient training on student mental health? Do they receive sufficient support and advice, including on the quality and suitability of different approaches, to adequately support students with mental ill-health?
- What overseas practices for supporting mental health in education and training should be considered for Australia? Why? Is there formal evidence of the success of these practices, such as an independent evaluation?

### **QUESTIONS ON GOVERNMENT-FUNDED EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT**

- How cost effective have the Australian Government's Disability Employment Service (DES) and Personal Helpers and Mentors service (PHaMs) been in enabling people with a mental illness to find and keep a job? Have the DES and PHaMs been targeted at the right populations?
- What alternative approaches would better support people with a mental illness (whether episodic or not) to find and keep a job?
- To what extent has the workforce participation of carers increased due to the Australian Government's Carers and Work Program?
- What will the transition to the NDIS mean for those receiving employment support?
- Which State or Territory Government programs have been found to be most effective in enabling people with a mental illness to find and keep a job? What evidence supports this?
- How could employment outcomes for people experiencing mental ill-health be further improved?

### **QUESTIONS ON GENERAL EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT TO FIRMS**

- What examples are there of employers using general disability support measures (through supported wages and assistance to provide workplace modifications) to employ people with a mental illness? How could such measures be made more effective to encourage employers to employ people with a mental illness?
- Are there other support measures that would be equally or more cost effective, or deliver improved outcomes?

### **QUESTIONS ON MENTALLY HEALTHY WORKPLACES**

- What types of workplace interventions do you recommend this inquiry explore as options to facilitate more mentally healthy workplaces? What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of the interventions; how would these be distributed between employers, workers and the wider community; and what evidence exists to support your views?
- Are employers pursuing the potential gains from increased investment in workplace mental health which have been identified in past studies? If so, which employers are doing this and how? If not, why are the potential gains not being pursued by employers?
- What are some practical ways that workplaces could be more flexible for carers of people with a mental illness? What examples are there of best practice and innovation by employers?
- How can workplace interventions be adapted to increase their likelihood of having a net benefit for small businesses?

- What role do industry associations, professional groups, governments and other parties currently play in supporting small businesses and other employers to make their workplaces mentally healthy? What more should they do?
- What differences between sectors or industries should the Commission take account of in considering the scope for employers to make their workplaces more mentally healthy?
- Are existing workers' compensation schemes adequate to deal with mental health problems in the workplace? How could workers' compensation arrangements, including insurance premiums, be made more reflective of the mental-health risk profile of workplaces?
- What overseas practices for supporting mental health in workplaces should be considered for Australia? Why? Is there formal evidence of the success of these practices, such as an independent evaluation?

#### **QUESTIONS ON REGULATION OF WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY**

- What, if any, changes do you recommend to workplace health and safety laws and regulations to improve mental health in workplaces? What evidence is there that the benefits would outweigh the costs?
- What workplace characteristics increase the risk of mental ill-health among employees, and how should these risks be addressed by regulators and/or employers?

#### ***From Section 4 – Framework to enhance mental health and improve participation and workforce contribution***

#### **QUESTIONS ON COORDINATION AND INTEGRATION**

- How effective are the governance and institutional arrangements for mental health in Australia in achieving the objectives agreed by COAG Health Council in the Fifth Plan? How can they be improved?
- To what extent do current governance and institutional arrangements promote coordination and integration of mental health services and supports across health and non-health sectors and different levels of government?
- What are the barriers to achieving closer coordination of health, mental health and non-health services and how might these be overcome?
- Is the suite of documents that comprises the National Mental Health Strategy effectively guiding mental health reform? Does it provide government and non-government stakeholders with clear and coherent policy direction? If not, what changes could be made?
- Are there aspects of mental health governance where roles and responsibilities are unclear or absent? Are the mechanisms for holding government decision-makers accountable for system performance sufficiently well-defined?

#### **QUESTIONS ON FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS**

- What have been the drivers of the growth in mental health expenditure in Australia? Are these same forces likely to continue driving expenditure growth in the future? What new drivers are likely to emerge in the future?
- Can you provide specific examples of sub-optimal policy outcomes that result from any problems with existing funding arrangements?

- How could funding arrangements be reformed to better incentivise service providers to deliver good outcomes, and facilitate coordination between government agencies and across tiers of government?
- Are the current arrangements for commissioning and funding mental health services — such as through government departments, PHNs or non-government bodies — delivering the best outcomes for consumers? If not, how can they be improved?
- How does the way the Medicare Benefits Scheme operate impact on the delivery of mental health services? What changes might deliver improved mental health outcomes?
- What government services and payments beyond those directly targeted at mental health should this inquiry seek to quantify, and how should this be done?

### **QUESTIONS ON MONITORING AND REPORTING OUTCOMES**

- Are decision-making forums for mental health receiving high quality and timely information on which to base strategic decisions?
- Does Australia have adequate monitoring and reporting processes to assure compliance with national standards and international obligations?
- Is there sufficient independence given to monitoring, reporting and analysing the performance of mental health services?
- Which agency or agencies are best placed to administer measurement and reporting of outcomes?
- What does improved participation, productivity and economic growth mean for consumers and carers? What outcomes should be measured and reported on?
- What approaches to monitoring and reporting are implemented internationally? What can Australia learn from developments in other countries?
- To what extent is currently collected information used to improve service efficiency and effectiveness?