

## CHF applauds Productivity Commission agenda for change in mental health

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The nations peak body for Australian healthcare consumers has welcomed the Draft Report released this week by the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Mental Health.

Leanne Wells, CEO of the Consumers Health Forum of Australia said the wide-sweeping report is detailed and thoughtful, with recommendations that compel urgent government action in the near and longer-term.

“The call for more responsive, person-centred and better coordinated systems of care for people with mental ill-health is resounding, long over-due and comes as no surprise. The factors driving poor outcomes have been identified over the years: this comprehensive consolidation of the issues in this report highlights the need for substantial reform”.

“Coupled with the fact that many people with mental ill-health do not access care due to stigma, cost and other reasons, the Commission’s finding that those who seek help are not getting the necessary level of care puts the scale of the problem into sharp relief” said Ms Wells.

“The report says it is about a long-term reform agenda requiring a generational change. CHF backs the call for fundamental reform and a refocus of our systems of care which will take time, resources and effort to achieve cultural shifts for health service funders, providers and the broader community.”

It is not just about reforming the mental health system. Any response to the Commission’s recommendations must equally ensure that other systems such as primary care and aged care are better equipped to respond to mental ill-health and are better integrated with mental health services in order to provide seamless, holistic care” said Ms Wells.

“Primary health care deserves special attention: it is the setting where the great majority of people are – or should be – accessing mental health care, stepped up into higher intensity services as appropriate. As we develop a Ten-Year Primary Health Care Strategy it will be remiss of us not to set new ways of delivering accessible, affordable, high quality, multidisciplinary team-based mental health care in this environment”.

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“CHF believes that services are best planned, coordinated and integrated regionally and for this to be facilitated by local governance and pooled funding arrangements. The Commission’s ideas on funding and institutional reform and the role of Primary Health Networks or some other type of regional commissioning authority should be seriously considered”.

“We welcome the Commission looking to investments beyond health services to address some of the other issues which are important in people’s lives. These were identified in the survey CHF conducted among consumers to inform our initial submission to the Inquiry and included issues such as housing, justice and employment. The response must be whole-of-government”.

“The emphasis on consumer and carer experience is very welcome, building on the work done by the Commission in their *Shifting the Dial* Report which called on governments to make the health system person-centred within five years. Ultimately the system has to work for the people who are the end users and they need to be engaged in designing it. This means new models of governance and a commitment to service co-design that involves consumers and carers in meaningful ways including supporting them to serve as leaders and agents of change.”

“The Commission’s spotlight on prevention, early detection and intervention commands attention. Services that identify people at risk and support them to access interventions that work for them are critical to allowing people to remain connected and improve their chances of living a contributing life into the future”.

“The strong focus on support for young people across different sectors to keep them well and engaged in study, training or work is also welcome. This reflects the call from CHF’s Youth Health Forum for meaningful, integrated and adaptive healthcare reform. We’d encourage governments, in making their response to the Commission’s final findings, to continue to engage with young people on the design of these initiatives”.

The report highlights the benefits of improving the mental health system, not just for consumers and their carers but for the economy and society as a whole. It is clear we cannot continue on the way we are: we need to do something different

This is why CHF joined with over 100 other organisations to sign up to [Charter 2020: Time to Fix Mental Health](#).

CHF’s submission to the Productivity Commission can be found [here](#).

CHF’s Youth Health Forum’s submission can be found [here](#).

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