Dear Prime Minister

Thank you for your letter of 16 December 2011 which outlined your *Statement of Expectations* for the National Mental Health Commission (‘the Commission’). I am pleased to provide you with this *Statement of Intent* which describes how the Commission will meet the responsibilities you have outlined, including an update on our progress to date.

As you would be aware, the Commission commenced its operation on 1 January 2012. The Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Mental Health Reform, the Hon Mark Butler MP, officially launched the Commission on 23 January 2012. In its first few months the full Commission has met twice, in addition to out of session work, to progress the busy work program ahead.

The Commission intends to meet a minimum of six times a year, and the first formal Commission meeting was held on 24 January 2012. We also held a planning session on 8-9 March 2012 to commence development of our strategic and work plans and commence development of the National Report Card on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention.

There were a number of items outlined in your *Statement of Expectations* and these are addressed below.

**Governance**

I note your reference to a number of compliance, reporting and employment activities, which I will respond to as issues of governance.

The Commission will operate in accordance with the *Public Service Act 1999* and the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997* and continue to seek opportunities to achieve its outcomes in a more efficient, effective and ethical manner. We are committed to ensuring the transparency and accountability of our own organisation, just as we are committed to increasing accountability and transparency more broadly in mental health and other service and support systems.
To this end the Commission has already made public a number of items relating to its progress to date, and will continue to do so as more information becomes available. Our website www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au includes our Operational Principles, Minutes and Communiqués from our meetings, as well as the meeting dates for the rest of 2012, which are attached for your reference. In addition to an official meeting, Commissioners will meet with local stakeholders to gather information and feedback.

I will provide you with an Annual Report on the activities of the Commission after the end of each financial year in accordance with the Requirements for Annual Reports for Departments, Executive Agencies and FMA Act Bodies, with the first Annual Report covering the period from the Commission’s establishment on 1 January to 30 June 2013. The Commission will also prepare financial statements as per the Finance Minister’s Orders, the first for the period from 1 January 2012 to 30 June 2012.

The Commission has made good progress with respect to employment and plans to show a leadership role in the promotion of good practice in the employment arena. We will comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 1992, the Equal Employment Opportunity Act 1987, the Commonwealth Disability Strategy and the Occupational Health and Safety (Commonwealth Employment) Act 1991 and we will ourselves seek to implement good practice as an employer which is responsive to the needs of employees experiencing a mental health issue.

The Commission will conduct an internal review of its operations at the end of 2012 to ensure compliance has been achieved.

**The National Report Card on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention**

The National Report Card on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (‘the Report Card’) was a 2010 election commitment, and during the 2011-12 Budget process the Australian Government decided that the Report Card would be the primary focus of the Commission. Following our establishment the Commission has now assumed full responsibility for this piece of work after an exchange of letters with the Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA).

The Commission has met twice to consider the Report Card, including its aims, intended audience, and how it can be developed in a way that is credible and useful for policymakers, planners and services, and resonates with people with a lived experience of mental health issues, their families, carers and other support people. With the first Report Card due by the end of 2012, Commissioners were strongly of the view that the primary focus during the first year of operation should be on consultation, design and production of the Report Card. Time constraints in the first iteration will place a greater reliance on the use of existing data.

Building on an open tender process established by DoHA, we have engaged an external consultant to develop a blueprint for the Report Card, and they have begun to facilitate extensive consultations with stakeholders on the options for content, data sources, structure and design. This will be in addition to consultation facilitated by the Mental
Health Council of Australia, as well as a series of high level targeted policy Roundtables in late April, which will be opened by Minister Butler and attended by Commissioners.

**Strategic Plan**

In your *Statement of Expectations* you asked for a three-year strategic plan to cover the period 2012-2014, with a draft submitted to Minister Butler by 31 March 2012 and the final for approval as soon as possible thereafter. I am please to advise that the draft has been sent by the Chair, Professor Allan Fels AO, to Minister Butler, and a copy is enclosed.

While planning work on the Report Card is our key priority, Commissioners agreed that its findings would be a significant determinant of the Commission’s subsequent work program. As a result, it was agreed that the first Strategic Plan could only be a transitional or ‘scene-setting’ document rather than providing a definitive statement of future actions, and that the document would evolve over time.

Commissioners did however place significant priority on defining broad goals and objectives, operating principles, critical success factors and risks, and the determination of effective communication and consultation strategies to support the development of the Report Card.

It is my intention to submit the draft plan to Commissioners at their 8 May meeting for their consideration, with a view to seeking Commissioners’ endorsement in June 2012. Finalisation of the plan will also be informed by further targeted consultations with critical stakeholders.

I would, of course, welcome any comments on the Commission’s draft Strategic Plan at this stage to ensure that directions and priorities accord with the Government’s expectations of the Commission.

**Work Plan**

You have asked that the Commission develop an annual operational plan, the first covering the period of July 2012 – June 2013, to be submitted for information by 30 June 2012. We have used Commissioners’ input to develop preliminary ideas around priorities for this document, which we simply refer to as our Work Plan. We will continue to develop this document, including our performance indicators, as the Strategic Plan is finalised, with a view to having final consultation with Commissioners on the Work Plan at the 21 June 2012 meeting.

**Communications and Engagement**

The launch of the Commission and inaugural meeting were both opened by consumer and carer representatives, highlighting the value of learning from people with lived experience of mental illness, their families, carers and other support people. Commissioners have agreed that effective communication and engagement is absolutely crucial to our work and success.
You have asked that the Commission develop a strategy to meaningfully engage with stakeholders and ensure their inclusion and participation in the Commission’s activities, within our first year of operation. We will progress this over the coming months and in developing this strategy, we will work in partnership with relevant organisations.

To date, the Commission has met with over 150 stakeholders including visits to South Australia and Western Australia to meet with key representatives from the government and non-government sectors and to visit services operating in a range of domains. We are capturing the information provided to us through correspondence and these meetings and are committed to ensuring these voices are heard, their issues are noted, and subsequently brought to the attention of the Commissioners for consideration when formulating their priorities.

As you will see from the draft Strategic Plan, we will enter into partnerships with key organisations and agencies with agreements that specifically outline how the parties will work together to further the goals or deliver on the Commission’s strategic initiatives. I am pleased to advise that a Memorandum of Understanding has been agreed with the Mental Health Council of Australia and others are planned with key partners including the National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum, Suicide Prevention Australia, the Australian Human Rights Commission, the Indigenous Mental Health Advisory Group and the Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre.

In addition to the stakeholder engagement work, we will develop an overarching Communications Strategy, both to consider the broader challenges in providing a coherent message regarding mental health and mental illness in the broader community and to guide the way the Commission informs the community about its purpose, role and work, including information about the Report Card. The Communications Strategy is expected to be considered by the Commission at its May meeting.

**The 10 Year Roadmap for Mental Health Reform**

I note your request that the Commission have a role in the ongoing evaluation of the Roadmap upon its completion and agreement by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG).

We are currently in communication with DoHA regarding the development of the Roadmap and the outcomes of consultations on the Roadmap auspiced by the Senior Officials Mental Health Working Group. It is the Commission’s strong hope that mental health reform will remain on COAG’s agenda. The Commission would welcome further information regarding our involvement in the Roadmap.

I trust this *Statement of Intent* meets your expectations and gives you an understanding of the active approach Commissioners and the Secretariat have taken to this ambitious and important agenda.
I have copied this letter to the Hon Mark Butler MP, in his capacity as the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Mental Health Reform.

It is our intention to publish this letter alongside your *Statement of Expectations* on our website to continually ensure transparency and our accountability to people with lived experience of mental illness, their families, carers and other support people.

Yours sincerely

Robyn Kruk AM
Chief Executive Officer

5 April 2012

Encl

A - Meeting Schedule 2012
B - Draft Strategic Plan 2012-2014
### 2012 meeting dates and locations for the National Mental Health Commission

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24 Jan</td>
<td>Inaugural Commission meeting #1</td>
<td>Sydney, NSW</td>
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<tr>
<td>8-9 Mar</td>
<td>Commission planning day / Report Card planning session</td>
<td>Sydney, NSW</td>
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<td>7-9 May</td>
<td>Commission meeting #2</td>
<td>Brisbane, QLD</td>
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<td>20-21 Jun</td>
<td>Commission meeting #3</td>
<td>Melbourne and Geelong, VIC</td>
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<td>15-16 Aug</td>
<td>Commission meeting #4</td>
<td>Alice Springs, NT</td>
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<td>3- 4 Oct</td>
<td>Commission meeting #5</td>
<td>Adelaide, SA</td>
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<td>21-22 Nov</td>
<td>Final Commission meeting for 2012 #6</td>
<td>Orange, NSW</td>
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