



Australian Government

National Mental Health Commission

The Hon Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
Canberra

The Hon Greg Hunt MP
Minister for Health
Parliament House
Canberra

Dear Prime Minister and Minister

Thank you for your letter of 5 June 2020 and your commitment to ensuring the National Mental Health Commission (the Commission) can continue to support and advise on the delivery of the mental health and suicide prevention agenda, and is positioned for an enhanced and strengthened role in future.

The Commission's aim is to be a respected and authoritative national leader in the development of an integrated and well-functioning mental health and suicide prevention system that is person-centred and connected, and supports better mental health and wellbeing in Australia.

I am pleased to provide you with this *Statement of Intent* which sets out how the Commission will meet the expectations you have outlined.

Our role

The Commission's purpose and responsibilities are to provide independent robust policy advice and evidence on ways to improve Australia's mental health and suicide prevention system, and to act as a catalyst for change to achieve those improvements through monitoring and reporting on investment in mental health and suicide prevention initiatives and ongoing engagement with stakeholders across the mental health and related sectors. The underpinning aim is to ensure that all Australians are able to lead a full and contributing life.

The Commission is independent from the agencies that fund and deliver mental health and suicide prevention policy and services. Through collaboration and engagement we will incorporate information and data from a broad range of sources, both inside and outside the traditional health or mental health areas, across sectors, jurisdictions, communities and internationally to provide evidence based reports and advice that represent diverse perspectives and are connected to community need.



Through its reach and impact the Commission will aim to provide leadership to support strengthening the system to meet the mental health and wellbeing needs of the community, create increased accountability and transparency in the mental health and suicide prevention system, and support the national prominence of mental health and wellbeing.

Mental Health and Suicide Prevention System Performance and Reform

The Commission will monitor and report on Australia's mental health and suicide prevention system to support continuous improvement, accountability and transparency with a particular focus on system performance, outcomes and impact on mental health and wellbeing. It will draw on data, indicators and frameworks, and lived experience to assess the progress of reforms, identify opportunities, gaps and barriers, and make recommendations for improvement.

The Commission will deliver a national report annually to the Australian Government and the community on the mental health and suicide prevention system that provides an assessment of the progress of current reforms and the impacts on communities, the incidence and impact of any significant events during the period, and recommendations for improvement. It will ensure that key mental health issues such as the experiences and causes of trauma or psychosocial illnesses are considered and appropriate reforms and responses are addressed. It will work collaboratively with agencies to address actions on recommendations in the reports.

The Commission will also deliver an annual report, for presentation to the Health Ministers, on the progress of implementation of the Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan 2017-22. This report will assess progress against the performance indicators and actions over the life of the plan. It will also deliver the following actions under this Fifth Plan: the Safety and Quality Engagement Guide in 2020; the National Mental Health Research Strategy in 2021; and the Peer Workforce Development Guidelines in 2021.

In addition, the Commission will commission spotlight reports and undertake other investigative work in areas that require more specific and detailed evidence and information to inform the mental health and suicide prevention system needs.

The Commission reports will be published on its website.

Provide Advice to the Australian Government

The Commission will deliver independent evidence based advice to the Australian Government where there is a priority need, identified or emerging issue and to target specific areas for Government focus. It will have regard to a broad range of systems and sectors, with a specific focus on points of intersection, and provide advice about the spectrum of need: from promotion and prevention to interventions needed to improve social and economic participation and access to social and other supports including housing, employment, education, social, clinical and emergency services and supports.

The advice will be based on the data and evidence we have gathered, combined with an understanding of people's lived experiences, from both users of services and those working to support them, and from the many examples of innovation across the sector, both in Australia

and internationally. The Commission's advice may take the form of plans, frameworks, reports, submissions, studies and direct responses to requests from Government.

The Commission will work closely with governments and the community to implement the priority and long-term commitments across the response and recovery phases of the National Mental Health and Wellbeing Pandemic Response Plan. The Commission will monitor and report on progress.

The Commission is also undertaking the development of a national framework to guide a coordinated approach in Australia to improve how governments work together to respond to and support people's mental health before, during and after natural disasters. The framework will be delivered in 2021.

Shaping the Future - Strategic Reform and Catalyst for Change

The Commission will support the Government to strengthen the mental health and suicide prevention system in Australia to meet the future mental health needs of the community. It will work with stakeholders to develop and implement national approaches to system improvement and investment.

Vision 2030 will be accompanied by an implementation Roadmap, delivered in 2020, that will identify the long-term strategies in investment, coordination, development and performance measurement to achieve the goals and objectives for the mental health and suicide prevention system as outlined in Vision 2030.

The draft National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy will also be delivered in 2020 with the final strategy to be delivered in June 2021. This Strategy will guide and inform the Government's investment and commitment to the health and wellbeing of children and will provide a framework for preventing mental illness and reducing its impact on children, families and the community.

The Commission will continue to lead the development of the National Workplace Initiative as a member of the Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance to deliver an evidence-based framework for workplace mental health, strategies to help people at work and those connected to them find suitable initiatives and resources, showcase successful approaches to mentally healthy workplaces and strengthen the many programs and interventions already underway in Australia.

The Commission will continue to develop its policy work and advice around innovations in e-mental health, including via international collaborations and by helping to develop strategies and frameworks to guide Australian investment in e-mental health.

The Commission acknowledges that diverse and genuine community engagement adds value to decision-making by providing direct knowledge about the needs of service users and service providers, informing more targeted and responsive services, initiatives and evaluation. It will work to increase the contribution and participation of communities in reforming the mental health and suicide prevention system to achieve better outcomes.

Collaboration and engagement

The Commission acknowledges that engaging stakeholders and facilitating meaningful participation is essential to achieving transformational change.

It is committed to engaging and collaborating across sectors, jurisdictions and internationally to improve the evidence base. The Commission prioritises engaging with people with a lived experience of mental health issues including carers and other support people, to ensure reforms reflect these experiences and insights, and are collectively owned and actioned.

The Commission seeks to foster open and collaborative partnerships through participation in international, regional, national and jurisdictional sector committees and forums; establishing project advisory groups with representation of key stakeholders that meet regularly to inform and guide the development of our work; and undertaking consultations and engagement programs via workshops, surveys, public forums and targeted interviews.

The Commission will facilitate collaboration across all sectors to promote and prevent mental illness and suicide – this includes health, housing, human services, income support, justice, education, employment, defence, veterans' affairs and the broader system to maximise outcomes and integrate service provision and system reform. We also work closely with government agencies including the Department of Health and mental health agencies in each of the jurisdictions and agencies across sectors.

The Commission acknowledges that communication has a key role in maintaining and extending the national prominence of mental health and wellbeing. Through collaboration and strengthening the community of practice, the Commission will extend the role of evidence-based communication within all of the Commission's work.

We are developing a stakeholder and engagement strategy and implementation plan in 2020 to embed effective and efficient stakeholder engagement into our strategic approach and operations.

Relationship with the Prime Minister and Minister

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will continue to provide regular updates to the Minister that include practical options on how to address identified issues.

The Chair of the Advisory Board and CEO welcome the opportunity for an annual joint meeting with the Prime Minister and Minister to focus on strategic policy and service delivery issues.

Relationship with the CEO and the Advisory Board

We note the expectations for the CEO and the Advisory Board to strengthen relationships across the sector, identify issues and opportunities for improvement in the mental health sector and provide strategic direction to the Commission's work program. We will work collaboratively to meet these expectations.

The Commission plans to hold Advisory Board meetings regularly to align with the work program. Advisory Board meetings are structured to enable collaboration on sector issues and opportunities for improvement, provide strategic input and expertise to the work program and inform the

Advisory Board of activities, significant decisions and issues relating to the Commission. The CEO and Senior Executive Leadership team work with the Advisory Board to develop the Commission's future work program as set out in the corporate plan.

Transparency and accountability

The Commission recognises the value and importance of good governance, performance and accountability. The Commission is governed by the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act) and the policies of the Commonwealth, and will continue to work to ensure that its workplace policies, processes and systems promote the efficient, effective, economical and ethical use of resources. Through its corporate plan and annual report, the Commission will be transparent and accountable for our performance.

The Commission is committed to fostering a flexible, efficient and high performing workplace. It operates in accordance within the Australian Public Sector employment framework and appoints staff under the *Public Service Act 1999*. It aims to be a place to work that includes best practice in selection, recruitment and promotion of staff, is innovative, open, transparent and inclusive, and ensures the health, safety and wellbeing of all its people. It is committed to upholding and promoting the APS values, as well as adhering to the APS Code of Conduct.

The Commission's Charter and Operating Principles outline the work and activities of the Commission and the manner in which they are exercised. They aim to strengthen governance and performance and will be updated to reflect our expanded role and lodged formally with the Department of Health.

We look forward to continuing to support the Government to deliver an integrated and well-functioning mental health and suicide prevention system that is person-centred and connected, and supports better mental health and wellbeing for all Australians.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christine Morgan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Christine Morgan
Chief Executive Officer
Commissioner

29 June 2020