



**PRIME MINISTER**


**The Hon Greg Hunt MP  
Minister for Health  
Minister Assisting the  
Prime Minister for the  
Public Service and Cabinet**

05 JUN 2020

Ref No: MS20-900092

Christine Morgan  
Chief Executive Officer  
National Mental Health Commission  
PO Box R1463  
ROYAL EXCHANGE NSW 1225

Dear Ms Morgan

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring the National Mental Health Commission (the Commission) can continue to support and advise on the delivery of our mental health agenda, and is positioned for an enhanced and strengthened role moving forward.

We are writing to outline our expectations of the Commission. This outline will assist the Government's commitment to effective governance and performance of the Commission, guided by the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act).

We would like to congratulate you on your contribution in the first year of your appointment as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and on the work undertaken by the Commission in supporting new priorities including Australia's first National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy. It is now timely to confirm the Government's expectations through an updated *Statement of Expectations* (below).

#### 1. Introduction

The Commission's purpose is to provide independent advice and evidence on ways to improve Australia's mental health and suicide prevention systems, and to act as a catalyst for change to achieve those improvements.

It is the role of the Commission to manage, administer and publicly release evidence-based information in order to promote mental health and wellbeing as a national priority. The Commission's work is informed through building and maintaining effective working relationships with stakeholders in Australia and internationally. The Commission will promote a person-centred approach to mental health care that engages and values the participation of people with lived experience, their families, carers and communities.

Through this work, the Commission supports strengthening the system to meet the future mental health needs of the community, creates greater accountability and transparency in the mental health system, and supports the national prominence of mental health and wellbeing.

The Department of Health has responsibility for national mental health policy development, and program and service design.

The Commission's work, under its specified functions, contributes to national mental health reform and policy developments, including by leading pieces of work at the Government's direction, monitoring and reporting on reform, and playing a part in guiding the Department's policy development and program and service design. The Commission's work may also play a part in guiding the work of other Government bodies and areas that intersect with mental health, at the discretion of said areas.

We expect the Commission focuses on ensuring it fulfils its purpose and functions, as set out in the updated Executive Order for the Commission, dated 2018, providing for an improved mental health system that better meets the needs of the Australian people. The Commission will review, analyse and promote research and best practice to support better treatment outcomes across the mental health sector.

We ask that, in undertaking your functions, you identify efficiencies and work collaboratively across the sector to ensure a streamlined approach to reporting and providing advice that does not duplicate the work of others. This will be particularly important in delivering an annual report on performance against identified indicators to the Council of Australian Governments Health Council on the progress of the implementation of the Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan. It will also be important in ensuring that the Commission works collaboratively with the Department of Health which is charged with Commonwealth responsibility for implementation.

The Commission should seek to facilitate collaboration across all sectors, governments and agencies that intersect with mental health and wellbeing.

## 2. The Commission's Work

As outlined in the Executive Order for the Commission, dated 2018, the functions of the Commission include data collection and analysis to inform evidence based advice to Government. The Commission will also support other Government priorities as requested by the Minister for Health (the Minister).

We note the Commission engages with the public to promote mental health and wellbeing, and works across all areas that promote mental health and prevent mental illness and suicide so that all Australians achieve the best possible mental health.

We expect the Commission's annual mental health and suicide prevention National Reports to the Government will provide recommended areas for focus and, where appropriate, provide options for government and sector responses. These reports should include areas of focus outside of major projects already underway. The Commission may consider including areas of focus secondary to the mental health sector that impact on the mental health and wellbeing of individuals, for example the education and justice sectors, natural disasters, and other events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The Commission should work with relevant bodies, including the Department of Health, to access action on findings within the reports.

The CEO will meet with the Minister to provide regular updates on the work of the Commission and provide practical options for the Government's consideration on how to address identified issues.

The Chair and CEO of the Commission will have an annual joint meeting with the Prime Minister and the Minister, which will have a forward facing strategic focus on policy and service delivery issues.

### 3. The Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan

The Commission is responsible for annual reporting on the progress and implementation of the Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan 2017-22 (the Plan). The annual reports are to be provided to the Council of Australian Governments Health Council. The annual reports are required to analyse data for each available performance indicator identified in the Plan. The Commission is also responsible for progressing a number of action items within the Plan, including the development of the National Peer Workforce Development Guidelines and development of the National Mental Health Research Strategy.

### 4. Other Activities

#### *Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance*

The Commission is responsible for leading the work of the Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance in the development of the National Workplace Initiative to provide a nationally consistent approach to workplace mental health requirements. Progress on the National Workplace Initiative is to be reported within the Commission's annual reports.

#### *Vision 2030*

The Commission is responsible for the development of the Vision 2030 for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (Vision 2030). Vision 2030 will provide a long-term national vision to provide direction for current and future governments. It will also contribute to the Government's priority of moving towards a society where Australians at risk of, or experiencing, mental health concerns and suicidality can access a connected and well-functioning system.

Vision 2030 will be supported by an implementation roadmap that will articulate the policy requirements, system architecture, funding mechanisms and service design and outcomes necessary to implement Vision 2030. The roadmap will be developed in the context of major reviews and inquiries such as the Productivity Commission's inquiry into mental health and the Royal Commission into Victoria's mental health system. The implementation roadmap will be developed in consultation with the Department of Health and be completed in 2020.

#### *The National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy*

The Commission is responsible for the development of the National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy (the Strategy), informed by a steering committee and an expert advisory group. The Strategy will guide and inform the Government's investment and commitment to the mental health and wellbeing of our children, families and the community. It is anticipated a draft Strategy will be delivered to Government by June 2020. However, this timeframe may be impacted by other priorities arising from the Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In line with Government priorities, the Commission will have responsibility for a range of additional specific activities to the ones listed above and as advised by the Government.

#### 5. Roles of the CEO and Advisory Board

Both the CEO and the Commission's Advisory Board (Advisory Board) will be responsible for strengthening relationships across the sector and identifying issues and opportunities for improvement in the mental health sector.

As CEO, in addition to being responsible as the accountable authority for the day-to-day leadership and management of the Commission, you will, in consultation with the Advisory Board, provide strategic direction to the Commission's work program.

The Advisory Board's Chair and members are appointed by the Government on the basis of their relevant expertise and experience. Members of the Advisory Board will publicly speak with a united voice on behalf of the Commission and will not commit the Commission to a particular course of action without the agreement of the CEO. In consultation with the CEO on matters of national importance, the Chair is tasked with speaking on behalf of the Advisory Board.

The Advisory Board will provide expert advice on the systems that intersect with mental health, gaps within the sector, opportunities for improvements, and provide strategic advice to the CEO. The Advisory Board will provide oversight and advice on the implementation of the Government's reforms. Where a consensus cannot be reached by the Advisory Board, the varied views will be put forward by the CEO to Government together with a recommendation from the CEO as to what course to take. Members of the Advisory Board will undertake their role in a way that not only adheres to the legislative and parliamentary obligations, but also promotes transparency of office and accountability within the mental health system.

As CEO it is expected you will value and work collaboratively with the Advisory Board, and keep the Advisory Board informed of the activities of, and significant decisions or issues relating to, the Commission. These would include such things as material changes to the Commission's work program, major projects, and key announcements. In the event of any changes to Commission governance or internal operations the CEO should provide change management leadership. If the advice of the Advisory Board is not taken by the Commission, a reasonable explanation will be provided by the CEO to the Advisory Board.

#### 6. Strengthening the Commission

Additional resourcing provided to strengthen the Commission to meet its expanding role requires appropriate changes to the Commission's internal operating rules. We seek your timely update of these by no later than 30 June 2020 for formal lodgement with the Department of Health.

The Commission's operating principles should include: the responsibilities of the CEO; the role of the Advisory Board and how work and decisions are made; time commitment expectations of the Advisory Board, including upper limits; guidance on how concerns are raised, mitigated and escalated within the Commission; as well as expectations on processes Advisory Board members are to adhere to when participating in events.

## 7. Compliance Activities

We ask you exercise prudence in your financial management of the Commission in the context of our expectations as set out in this document and the requirements of a non-corporate entity under the PGPA Act.

Under the PGPA Act, you must manage the affairs of the Commission in a way that promotes the efficient, effective, economical and ethical use of resources. Under the PGPA Act, officials are required to do this in a manner that is consistent with the policies of the Commonwealth (for example, Commonwealth Procurement Rules).

Under the PGPA Act, you must notify the Minister, as soon as practicable, of any significant issue that has affected the Commission. A significant issue, under section 19 of the PGPA Act, includes significant non-compliance with the finance law.

## 8. The Commission as an Employer

The Commission's staff will be employed under the *Public Service Act 1999*.

The Commission must comply with the Australian Public Service Commission's guidelines to deliver the Commission's priorities, through good practice in managing people and equipping people to develop the skills and knowledge they need. This will also support you in embedding ethical behaviour across the whole Commission.

We ask you provide a safe working environment and lead the Commission in such a way that it is seen as a good place to work, family friendly, and an employer that is inclusive of our diverse community. You should comply with the principles set out in the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the *Equal Employment Opportunity (Commonwealth Authorities) Act 1987*, and with the requirements of the National Disability Strategy.

The Commission should set human resource standards and ensure it is well placed to effectively implement workplace policy of an equivalent standard to other public sector workplaces. We ask you meet best practice in selection, recruitment and promotion of staff in line with the merit principle.

## 9. Corporate Plan

The Commission will be responsible for developing and preparing a corporate plan. The CEO will consult the Advisory Board when developing and preparing the corporate plan.

The Commission's corporate plan should be forward thinking and provide insight into the bigger picture the Commission is working towards. It should detail what the Commission is hoping to achieve and the identified benefits to the Australian people. The corporate plan must be prepared in accordance with the PGPA Act.

The CEO may, at any time, review a corporate plan and consider whether a variation to the plan is necessary. The CEO will consult the Advisory Board on any proposed material changes and, in accordance with the PGPA Act, vary a corporate plan.

The Minister may, at any time, request the CEO vary a corporate plan. If the Minister makes such a request, the CEO must vary the plan.

10. Annual Report

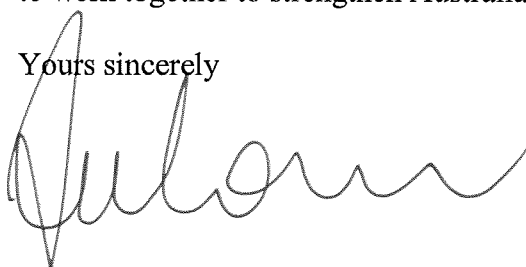
You must, after the end of each financial year, submit to the Minister, for presentation to the Parliament of Australia, a report (an annual report) on the Commission's operations during that year. The annual report must be prepared in accordance with the *Public Service Act 1999*, the PGPA Act, and the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014*.

11. Conclusion

We would appreciate your response to this letter in the form of a *Statement of Intent*, by 30 June 2020, outlining how the Commission proposes to meet the expectations outlined herein. To enable greater transparency and accountability, we ask the Commission publish and make publically available the information in this letter along with your response.

We consider the Commission to be a very valuable entity, and we look forward to continuing to work together to strengthen Australia's mental health system.

Yours sincerely



Scott Morrison



Greg Hunt