

Factsheet: Mental health

Background Information

An estimated 3.6 million Australians aged 16-85 experience mental ill health every year.¹

The Commission has welcomed the establishment of the National Mental Health Commission (NHMC) in 2012. The NHMC advises government and the community on the effectiveness of mental health programmes and services.

Key Issue – Mental health services for vulnerable groups

There remain inadequate support services for severely mentally ill people. The needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples remain unmet. In the period 2008-2012 the rate of deaths from suicide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples was almost double the rate for the rest of the population.² Seclusion and restraint practices continue to be used against people with mental illness.

There remains a need to improve and adequately fund services to address these concerns. Many existing mental health service providers that rely on government for continued funding and have experienced significant funding uncertainty.

In 2014 the NMHC completed a national review of mental health programmes and services. The review found fundamental structural shortcomings in the current system and made 25 recommendations to guide reform over the next decade.³

The NMHC review also highlighted the absence of inclusion of mental health programs and supports for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex (LGBTI) people.⁴ The report also included a recommendation that relevant contracts for service providers require expertise and cultural sensitivity for LGBTI people.⁵

Self-harm among children is an area of key concern. In Australia intentional self-harm is the leading cause of death among children and young people aged 15-24 years.⁶ In the Children's Rights Report 2014 the National Children's Commissioner report that significant gaps in our knowledge of this issue is inhibiting our ability to prevent injury and death resulting from intentional self-harm. The Report made several recommendations aimed at addressing these gaps.⁷

Recommendation

Government fund mental health services and implement the recommendations of the National Mental Health Commission and the Children's Rights Report 2014.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *4326.0 – National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing: Summary of Results, 2007* (2008).

² Productivity Commission, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2014* (2014), 8.41.

³ National Mental Health Commission *National Review of Mental Health Programmes and Services – Summary* (2014). At <http://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au/our-reports/review-of-mental-health-programmes-and-services.aspx> (viewed 24 June 2015).

⁴ National Mental Health Commission, *National Review of Mental Health Programmes and Services* Volume 1, p 34 & Volume 2, p 54 (1 December 2014).

⁵ National Mental Health Commission, *National Review of Mental Health Programmes and Services* Volume 1, p 80 (1 December 2014). These findings were confirmed by recent research conducted by the Australian Human Rights Commission. See *Resilient Individuals*

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *3303.0 – Causes of Death, Australia, 2012* (2014), Table 1.3, Line 40. At

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/3303.0Explanatory%20Notes12012?OpenDocument> (viewed 12 June 2015).

⁷ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Children’s Rights Report 2014* (2014).