



Mental health inquiry — draft report

Factsheet: General Practitioners (GPs)

General Practitioners (GPs) are the frontline service for most mental health care in urban and regional parts of Australia. GPs have a vital role in managing the overall health of patients with a mental illness and referring them for specialist treatment when needed.

Many GPs involved in the Productivity Commission's Inquiry indicated they felt either overwhelmed or inadequately prepared to deal with mental health issues, and found it challenging to gather a full understanding of what services were available for patients.

GPs could be better supported in:

- Assessing consumers with mental health problems.
- Managing the side effects of mental health medications.
- Connecting patients into other services (such as online mental health services).

Consumers with mental ill-health would benefit from better co-ordination between GPs and other clinicians.

The Productivity Commission's Inquiry makes a number of recommendations to address these issues:

- GPs should be funded (through Medicare) to create and maintain a single care plan for consumers with complex care needs.
- All GPs should have access to psychiatric advice over the phone (funded through Medicare) to help them manage their patients.
- Mental health referral pathways should be detailed online for all regions, for example through the HealthPathways platform.
- Introduce a continuing professional development course that educates GPs about best practice approaches to managing medications used to treat mental illness.
- The number of mental health nurses practicing in Australia — in GP clinics, community health services, and aged care facilities — should be significantly increased.

1 in 8 Aust.



1 in 8 visits to a GP are related to mental health.

4 MILLION

About 4 million people (15% of the population) receive a mental health related prescription from their GP in a year.

“ Consumers with mental ill-health would benefit from better co-ordination between GPs and other clinicians. ”



To see all of our recommendations and read our full draft report, or to access our other fact sheets please go to www.pc.gov.au or google search productivity commission mental health report.