

31 July 2025

Australian Government
Productivity Commission
Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement Review

Dear Commissioners,

Re: Interim Report - Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement Review

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this review. We were pleased to see our submission (sub. 35) cited in **Box 4.3 of the interim report**, highlighting the need to fund and scale **workforce education and training** to support the mental health and wellbeing of children and families.

It was also encouraging to hear from the CEO of Mental Health Australia, reflecting on the recent Health and Mental Health Ministers meeting and their renewed commitment to prioritising child and youth mental health in the next Agreement. We support this and note alignment with Mental Health Australia's six tangible actions, particularly the call to **integrate mental health in education** and **increase workforce capacity to support child mental health**.

We strongly endorse **Draft Recommendation 4**, supporting the development of an overarching national strategy, a new five year Agreement and bilateral schedules; all **co-designed** with lived and living experience, families, carers and the workforce. We also support the proposed **extension of the current agreement to mid 2027** to enable genuine co-design and more effective system reform.

In line with **Draft Recommendation 5**, we re-iterate our call of fully **implementing the National Mental Health Workforce Strategy**, with clear funding, public prioritisation of actions and strong accountability mechanisms. We encourage national investment in scalable, evidence informed training for GPs, paediatricians, educators and other non-specialist professionals supported by a consistent national framework for training and capability development.

We also support **Draft Recommendations 8 and 9** and recommend that **children and families are explicitly prioritised** in commissioning guidance. Strengthening early intervention and prevention especially through schools and general practice should be a clear focus. Commissioning guidance should embed **child and family centered approaches**.

Finally, we recommend that the next Agreement further **strengthen the role of lived experience**. This includes embedding lived and living experience in **governance, service design, workforce training and evaluation**, and **recognising cross sector collaboratives** such as the Melbourne Children's Campus Mental Health Strategy as a blueprint for other Australian paediatric hospitals.

These additions will help ensure the next Agreement is **inclusive, future focused and responsive** to the needs of children, families and professionals who support them.

We appreciate the Commission's consultative approach and welcome the opportunity to remain engaged as this work progresses.

Yours sincerely,

Belinda Horton
Program Director, Melbourne Children's Campus Mental Health Strategy

