



Name: Mission Australia

Submission date: 6/06/2025

Participant background

1. For the purposes of this consultation, which of the following best describes you:

I am an organisation that provides or coordinates care services

2. Which of the following care sectors will your feedback relate to? Please select all that apply.

Aged care; Disability; Early childhood education and care; Health; Homelessness; community housing; employment services etc

3. What kind of care supports, services and programs do you have experience with, and in what jurisdictions?

The participant did not respond to this question.

1. Reform of quality and safety regulation to support a more cohesive care economy

1. To what extent do differences in quality and safety regulation make it costly or complex to provide or access care services?

To a great extent

2. What are the reasons for your answer?

The participant did not respond to this question.

3. To what extent should quality and safety regulations be more aligned across the different care service sectors and jurisdictions?

To a great extent

4. What are the reasons for your answer?

The participant did not respond to this question.

2. Embed collaborative commissioning to increase the integration of care services

1. What is your experience with collaborative commissioning

The participant did not respond to this question.

2. What are the benefits of pursuing greater collaborative commissioning?

The participant did not respond to this question.

3. What are the barriers to collaborative commissioning, and do you have any suggestions for solutions that would lead to better collaboration in the commissioning of care services?

The participant did not respond to this question.

3. A national framework to support government investment in prevention

1. What are the main barriers to governments investing in evidence-based prevention programs across the care economy?

The participant did not respond to this question.

2. What are some examples of successful prevention programs (this could include discontinued programs)?

The participant did not respond to this question.

3. How can governments better support investment in prevention activities that have broad and long-term benefits for the Australian community?

The participant did not respond to this question.

Cover sheet: Supporting document #1

Response to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Delivering quality care more efficiently

June 2025

Mission Australia welcomes the opportunity to engage in the Productivity Commission's Inquiry 'Delivering Quality Care more efficiently', the fourth of the five priority pillars identified by the Albanese Labor Government as part of their productivity growth agenda. We commend the inclusion of quality care as a priority area of focus, and we look forward to engaging with the Commission throughout the consultation process.

We have strong interest in the three policy reforms suggested for this (Pillar 4) inquiry, namely:

- **Reform of quality and safety regulation to support a more cohesive care economy**
- **Embedding collaborative commissioning to increase the integration of care services;**
and
- **A national framework to support government investment in prevention**

In this brief submission, we will make only high-level observations and would welcome an opportunity to engage directly with Commissioners Roberts, Stokie and Jackson and the team at the Commission in the coming months as they prepare the Interim Report. Mission Australia will also provide a more detailed submission for consideration in the next stage of the consultation process.

About Mission Australia

Mission Australia is a national Christian charity that has been standing alongside Australians in need since 1859. We work to end homelessness, provide housing, assist struggling families and children, address mental health issues, fight substance dependencies, support people with disability and much more. Together, we stand with Australians in need for as long as they need us. In 2023-24, we supported over 160,000 people through 477 programs and services across several areas including homelessness, housing, strengthening communities, children and families, youth, employment and disability.

Priority Reforms

Reform of quality and safety regulation to support a more cohesive care economy

The long-standing challenges and inefficiencies that arise from Australia's Federated system of governments is well-illustrated when considering the various and variable quality and safety regulations, frameworks, guidelines and standards across the jurisdictions.

One example of this is worker screening schemes which are essential components to protect vulnerable people being supported with services. However, implementation across jurisdictions and governments is inefficient and imposes unnecessary productivity limitations and cost on national not-for-profit community service organisations (CSOs) like Mission Australia (MA).

Each State and Territory has its own process for many worker screening checks including assessing the risk a prospective or current worker poses, names for checks, age requirement, validity period, application and renewal rules, application time, processing time, payments.

MA employs many people who work in more than one jurisdiction, and who are thus currently required to have more than one Working With Children Check (WWCC) and other checks, including the Board of Directors, Executives, senior management and "back office" workers who have access to sensitive data such as some roles in IT, Risk, HR and Legal branches.

In brief, this fragmented, confusing and inconsistent situation imposes significant risk, burden and cost on CSOs that operate nationally like MA. These inefficient and unnecessary costs can include:

- imposing administration and compliance effort and cost;
- risking non-compliance which could endanger children and other vulnerable people; and
- limiting workforce flexibility, deployment and thus productivity.

Working With Children and Police Checks are examples of these administrative issues and there are others. The adoption of national standards for quality and safety would simplify compliance and have positive implications for operational elements such as workforce training obligations.

Embedding collaborative commissioning to increase the integration of care services

Mission Australia is already exploring concepts of collaborative/relational commissioning and we will be keen to provide more detailed input to the consultation process in the next phase. We made some relevant comments in our submissions to the Department of Social Services consultation processes in late 2023:

- The [Not-For-Profit Sector Development Blueprint](#); and
- The [Community Sector Issues Paper](#).

In these submissions we noted that there have been relatively recent advances in Australia and overseas of commissioning models that are designed to better bring together a diverse range of actors and break

down existing policy and service delivery silos to support community-led responses to community-identified issues. These include:

- system convening ('bring people together across sector, organisational and community boundaries ... to create positive change in how systems like public services operate'),¹
- alliance commissioning ('brings together providers and commissioners to create an integrated team to lead, coordinate and deliver services designed to meet mutually agreed outcomes').²
- community commissioning ('handing power and resource over to communities that is held by public sector institutions').³

We have also noted in these submissions that strategic reform of commissioning processes will be a key element of reforming partnership arrangements between the Government and CSOs. The current commissioning of services is neither efficient or effective, and at a minimum should include the following elements to enhance partnership arrangements and work towards better outcomes:

- Involving people and communities with living/lived experience, to improve program design and delivery and achieve First Nations self-determination goals.
- Outcomes-based contracts to incentivise performance based on change achieved for clients, compared with forms of contracting which measure administrative tasks and inputs.
- Aligning contract periods with the time taken to achieve the goal, to increase certainty about program achievements and stabilise the human services workforce (see **Section 3** for detail).
- A clear view on the evidence of what works, to drive better outcomes.
- Consolidation of contracts on a place and/or cohort and/or outcome area basis to reduce the current fragmentation of service provision, increase accountability and enable new ways of working.
- Procurement processes to encourage collaboration.
- Robust monitoring and evaluation to track progress and feed into continuous improvement.

MA is one of the founding members of [The Possibility Partnership](#) (TPP) which is made up of nine 'leading NGOs collaborating with communities, government, philanthropy and others to fundamentally reimagine the human services system and contribute to a healthier more equitable society where everyone has what they need to flourish.'

¹ New System Alliance, undated report. System convening: What you told us. At <https://newsystemalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/New-System-Alliance-Systems-Convener-Report-2023.pdf>

² Cardiff & Vale Regional Partnership Board, undated fact sheet. Alliance contracts. At <https://cavrp.org/app/uploads/2022/11/Alliance-Contracts-A-different-approach-to-commissioning-focused-on-collaborative-working-to-achieve-agreed-outcomes-1.pdf>

³ Lent, A, Studdert, J & Walker, T. (2019). Community commissioning: Shaping public services through people power. At <https://www.newlocal.org.uk/publications/community-commissioning-shaping-public-services-through-people-power/>

In a recent joint submission with the Strengthening Communities Alliance to a review of the Department of Social Services' Children, Youth and Families programs, the [TPP stated](#):

*Flexible funding models that allow innovation and evolution over time, rather than a rigid approach that allocates funding to programs as identified at the start of the funding period.
Developing an equitable and streamlined approval or shared decision-making process that maximises community ownership, reduces bureaucracy and supports the Community-Controlled sector, including Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations.*

MA is excited by the possibilities of reformed commissioning processes, based on proactive and engaged relationships between the funder and the service deliverer – to deliver better, more efficient and innovative community services.

A national framework to support government investment in prevention

In our [2025 Federal Budget Submission](#) and our [2023 submission to the Department of Social Services consultation on the next National Housing & Homelessness Plan](#) (NHHP), we have strongly argued for a prioritisation of prevention in homelessness services investment. Mission Australia has repeatedly urged the Federal Government to build on its strong start to addressing the housing and homelessness emergency by focusing on approaches we know provide early intervention and prevention of homelessness, to ensure it is **rare, brief and non-recurring**.

Establish a \$500 million Homelessness Prevention Transformation Fund

The homelessness service system must substantially transform if we are to end homelessness. Currently, Mission Australia and others are working within a system designed primarily to respond to people when they are homeless, or when it is almost unavoidable – this is too late. If we build capacity and capability to provide the right assistance to people before they reach crisis point, we will avoid unnecessary human misery, and more effectively help them maintain or find housing (with or without complementary supports) and save taxpayer funds.

To shift the system to this more efficient footing (see diagram below), Mission Australia recommends that the centrepiece of reform be a \$500 million Homelessness Prevention Transformation Fund. The Fund would be the catalyst for the transition to prevention by funding policy, program and practice changes, investing in evidence-based housing and support models, with the secondary objective of freeing up investment in housing and homelessness over the longer term as the need for cost-intensive crisis interventions diminishes.



Universal Prevention Measures

As we said in our NHHP submission in 2023, there is increasing recognition of the importance of universal prevention measures that address societal drivers of homelessness and several recent attempts to quantify their impacts. The two primary societal drivers of homelessness have been identified as poverty - or strength of welfare systems - and the availability of sufficient affordable housing stock, while others include levels of violence, access to healthcare and childcare, and conditions at the lower end of the labour market.

Homelessness Solutions Framework Model

MA and Professor Paul Flatau of the Centre for Social Impact at the University of Western Australia have developed a prototype of a Homelessness Solutions Model Framework, which identifies the full range of available housing and homelessness measures and recommend that it form the structure of the NHHP.

Also outlined in our 2023 NHHP submission, the rationale for developing the Framework is to address the key question: *How should Australian governments allocate resources to end homelessness?* The Framework incorporates evidence about the effectiveness, costs and cost-effectiveness of housing and homelessness responses across the full spectrum of responses required to end homelessness in Australia.

Our prototype Framework categorises all possible housing and homelessness measures into the following policy and program domains and intervention types:

1. **Permanent housing with support as required** — increasing the supply of social and affordable housing and funding for support programs, including:
 - Housing for people with no support needs
 - Housing for people with support needs
 - Permanent supportive housing for people with experiences of chronic homelessness and multiple disadvantage
2. **Prevention measures** for people at risk of homelessness, including:
 - Universal homelessness prevention measures, to address societal drivers of homelessness
 - Targeted support for cohorts with elevated risk of homelessness

- Responses that prevent entry to housing crisis/homelessness including tenancy support measures
- 3. **Crisis responses for people experiencing homelessness**, including:
 - Outreach support
 - Transitional housing and support

The Homelessness Solutions Model Framework is still in prototype phase and we have shared it with the Productivity Commission previously. The development of the prototype Framework has made clear that the evidence base is patchy about outcomes achieved by homelessness programs, on social housing and affordable housing initiatives, and on the cost of interventions. Nevertheless, the evidence base is strong enough for us to be confident in concluding:

- Effective and cost-effective measures are available to prevent homelessness, both housing responses and support responses. Currently in Australia, these measures do not operate at scale.
- Other effective and cost-effective measures are available to shorten people's time in homelessness crisis and to prevent recurrence. Most resources in the homelessness service system are currently allocated to crisis responses.
- Deeper investment in homelessness prevention would constitute an effective and cost-effective systemic approach to resolving the current homelessness situation.

We have recommended that government policy makers, researchers and practitioners work together to refine the Framework and populate it more fully, so that collectively we can be in a better position to fully understand outcomes achieved for net investment provided across the full housing and homelessness spectrum. Further, over the longer-term, we recommend that this Framework be the starting point for a co-designed, evidence-based *Resource Allocation Model* that will assist policy makers direct absolute and relative expenditure on different types of interventions with the end goal of ending homelessness.

Of course, homelessness is just one example within the quality care/community services sector that would benefit from this form of prevention and early intervention focus. Fundamentally, a prioritisation of prevention and early intervention will be better for the people the services are their to support; and, better for financial sustainability.