

March 2025

## **Submission to the Productivity Commission Review of the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement**

### **The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care**

The Council of Australian Governments established the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (the Commission) to lead and coordinate national improvements in the safety and quality of health care. The Commission provides strategic advice to health ministers on best practices to improve healthcare safety and quality and makes recommendations about priority areas for action. The Commission develops national initiatives that promote an Australian healthcare system that is informed, supported and organised to deliver safe and high-quality health care that contributes to better health outcomes for patients, consumers and communities.

The Commission works in four priority areas:

1. Patient safety
2. Partnering with patients, consumers and communities
3. Quality, cost and value
4. Supporting health professionals to provide safe and high-quality care.

The *National Health Reform Act 2011* specifies the Commission's roles and responsibilities as a corporate Commonwealth entity under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*.

### **The National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards**

The National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards were developed by the Commission in collaboration with states and territories, the private sector, clinical experts, patients and carers. The primary aims of the NSQHS Standards are to protect the public from harm and to improve the quality of health service provision. They provide a quality-assurance mechanism that tests whether relevant systems are in place to ensure expected standards of safety and quality are met.

The Commission has also developed National Safety and Quality Digital Mental Health Standards and National Mental Health Standards for Community Managed Organisations. Together with the NSQHS Standards, these standards ensure that there are assurance mechanisms for safety and quality across all healthcare services.

### **The Australian Health Service Safety and Quality Accreditation Scheme**

The Australian Health Service Safety and Quality Accreditation (AHSSQA) Scheme provides for the national coordination of accreditation processes.

Under the AHSSQA Scheme, the Commission's role is to:

- Develop and maintain the NSQHS Standards
- Approve accrediting agencies to assess health service organisations against the NSQHS Standards
- Undertake ongoing liaison with state and territory health departments on opportunities to improve the NSQHS Standards and the accreditation system
- Report to health Ministers annually on safety and quality.

## Commission role in National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement

The Commission's role is stated in the section on Safety and Quality in the current NMHSP Agreement:

### Safety and Quality

115. The Parties reaffirm their joint commitment to making safety and quality central to mental health and suicide prevention service delivery and will collaborate to establish and maintain nationally consistent standards for mental health and suicide prevention care, policy, planning and reporting. This includes the development of national standards and strategies in line with quality and safety standards.

116. The Parties agree to implement and monitor the *National Guidelines to improve the co-ordination and treatment of people with severe and complex mental illness* to improve the co-ordination and treatment of people with severe and complex mental illness.

117. The Parties agree to work collaboratively with the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care to uphold and promote existing safety and quality standards for mental health and suicide prevention, and to undertake continuous review of existing standards and/or development of new safety and quality standards to continually improve quality, safety and capacity in the Australian mental health and suicide prevention system.

The Commission supports this arrangement and will continue to work collaboratively with governments on national safety and quality standards.

During 2025 through to 2027, the Commission will collaborate with the Australian Government, states and territories, and a broad range of stakeholders, including clinicians and clinical experts, patients and communities to develop the third edition of the NSQHS Standards.

The focus of the third edition of the Standards will be on new and emerging safety and quality issues expected to impact the healthcare system over the next ten years, as well as the persistent safety and quality risks that require ongoing improvement nationally.

The third edition of the NSQHS Standards will focus on areas in health care where there are ongoing or emerging issues influencing the optimal delivery of health care in Australia, and opportunities to improve its quality. In a rapidly evolving healthcare system, it is critical that the third edition of the NSQHS Standards prioritises areas on which to focus including: emerging risks to high quality care, technological change, workforce trends, contemporary evidence of best practice and models of care, and external system drivers to ensure relevance and applicability into the future.

## AUSTRALIAN COMMISSION ON SAFETY AND QUALITY IN HEALTH CARE

With the National Safety and Quality Digital Mental Health Standards and National Safety and Quality Mental Health Standards for Community Managed Organisations, the Commission ensures there are quality assurance mechanisms in place for mental health services provided across multiple sectors.