

Dear Productivity Commission Commissioners

RE: Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement Review

Thank you kindly for focusing on this important area of health and wellbeing. This is something I am concerned about within the human rights policy arena. As I have grown older, I have also personally known more and more males who have expressed suicidal ideation or who have chosen to die by suicide. On average, six males die by suicide each and every day in Australia. Therefore, my submission focuses on the experiential nature of males within Australia:

1. Reviewing recent Australian Institute of Health and Welfare data¹ for NSW, we can extrapolate for males in NSW from 2019 onwards that the incidence of suicide remains at an approximately constant level of 0.03% per year within each ten-year age banding (in years) of 25 to 34, 35 to 44, 45 to 54, 55 to 64, 65 to 74, and 75 to 84; and
2. Reviewing your Interim Report graph data from 2014 onwards for males presented on pages 8 and 81, we can extrapolate males are consistently three times more likely to die by suicide when compared to females; and
3. Reviewing the 234 pages of your Interim Report, there is no mention of the ongoing devastation that death by suicide has on males, and the word “males” — apart from within the graph data — is not mentioned at all within the written text of your Interim Report.

My three points above indicate a lack in acknowledging males as a specific high-risk group necessitating an explicit prioritisation within your Interim Report. When males choose to die by suicide, they do so in a manner not requiring hospitalisation: they ‘successfully’ end their own lives.

The experiential nature of males within Australia is not cherished; Australian males are more often portrayed as perpetrators or problems. Heterosexuality is curiously not mentioned at all within your Interim Report: this is another oversight given other sexualities and genders are mentioned. We can easily surmise “heterosexual males” would be the largest cohort requiring urgent attention.

Therefore, I **urgently recommend** that “males” is added as a recommendation in your Final Report as a focus area requiring specific supports, and that male gender and male heterosexuality is not subsumed within smaller niche categories moving forward in your Final Report.

¹ www.aihw.gov.au/suicide-self-harm-monitoring/geography/states-territories/monthly-suicide-registers