

Mental Health Inquiry
Productivity Commission

3rd April 2019

Dear Sir/ Madam

Submission to the Inquiry into the economic impacts of mental ill-health

Shelter WA welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission in response to the Issues Paper 'The Social and Economic Benefits of Improving Mental Health' provided by the Productivity Commission in regard to an inquiry into the role of improving mental health to support economic participation and enhancing productivity and economic growth requested by the Treasurer.

Shelter WA is the independent peak body, based in Perth, Western Australia, that advocates for social and affordable housing and ending homelessness. Our vision is that all people living in Western Australia have housing that enables them to thrive. Shelter WA undertakes research and policy development, engagement, and advocacy to drive solutions to build an effective housing system and alleviate housing-related poverty.

Housing, homelessness and mental health are strongly interrelated. A variety of individual and structural factors increase the likelihood of mental ill-health onset and the likelihood of poor housing outcomes among persons with lived experience of mental ill-health. For instance, homelessness might trigger various mental health issues and individuals with lived experience of mental ill-health are more vulnerable to common risks for homelessness.

An individuals' living situation can severely affect their mental health, the ability to access safe, stable and conveniently located housing helps to prevent mental health issues from happening and enables better management of, and recovery from, existing mental ill-health.

In addition to this, having greater choice and control over one's housing and support services is a crucial contributor to wellbeing and quality of life of people that have experienced mental ill-health.¹

¹¹ Nelson,G., Sylvestre,J., Aubry, T., George,L. and Trainor,J. (2007). 'Housing choice and control, housing quality, and control over professional support as contributors to the subjective quality of life and community adaptation of people with severe mental illness', Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research, vol.34, no.2:89-100.

Autonomy in regard to housing aspirations and a stable house that nurtures the development of meaningful relationships in the individuals' life, are strongly linked to improved wellbeing and quality of life and decreased service use, as well as symptomology (Nelson et al., 2007).

Furthermore, the relationship between housing quality and mental health is substantial. Tenants with lived experience of mental illness have significantly benefited from adequate housing. By reducing mental health care expenditure, as well as greater wellbeing and stable housing (Nelson et al., 2007).

In addition to this, the access to adequate housing with stable tenure gives people the capacity to focus on mental health treatment and rehabilitation, and participation in the community. Both inadequate access to housing and the quality of housing can be detrimental to mental health.

Shelter WA would like to reiterate that in order to improve mental health to support economic participation and enhancing productivity and economic growth, it is crucial to take into account the substantial role that safe, secure and adequate housing can play in the lives of people with lived experience of mental ill-health.

Housing unlocks opportunity, enhances health and well-being, provides access to education and employment options. It is critical to enable people to fully participate in community life.

In order to support people with mental ill-health and their ability to live within the community with a home and access to the services that they require to be able to thrive, Shelter WA proposes a way forward that identifies a key housing led solution.

Shelter WA has partnered with Price Waterhouse Cooper to develop the thinking around supported accommodation for those facing homelessness and experiencing mental ill-health, and the final report is attached to this submission.

If you have any queries in regard to this submission, please feel free to contact me on 08 9325 6660 or ceo@shelterwa.org.au.

Yours sincerely,

Michelle Mackenzie

CEO