



MENTAL HEALTH FACTSHEET:

Children and young people

Mental health underpins children's and young people's social and emotional development and their sense of wellbeing. Investing in the mental health of children and young people delivers significant returns, for them, their family and the community.

The Productivity Commission's Mental Health Inquiry presents a long-term plan for a person-centred mental health system that prioritises prevention and early intervention. This includes a number of recommended actions to improve the social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people. At present, young Australians at risk of mental ill-health and their families often face many difficulties accessing the support they need.

We make a number of recommendations to better support the social and emotional wellbeing of children in schools and early childhood education and care by improving early identification of risk factors, and making the education system more effective in supporting their wellbeing. For those children and their families who need additional care, we are recommending changes to the mental health system to make sure that there are better links between services and that the right services are available at the right time, regardless of how people enter the system.

New parents

The mental health of parents affects the social and emotional wellbeing of their children. To help both parents and their children, governments should improve screening for mental ill-health among new parents, including improving the collection of data and monitoring of screening rates (action 5.1). Parents requiring support would also benefit from other recommendations made in the report (see 'Consumers and carers fact sheet' for more information).



Early childhood

Additional funding should be provided to help early childhood education and care services to support children's social and emotional development. Voluntary early childhood checks should be expanded to make sure that children's social and emotional development is assessed before they enter pre-school (action 5.2).



School-age children

To monitor how schools are supporting students of all ages over time, all schools should measure student wellbeing. This includes:

- specific targets and nationally consistent measures of student wellbeing (action 5.3).
- national guidelines for social and emotional learning programs delivered in schools (action 5.5).
- schools being required to report on their progress against wellbeing outcomes, with school principals being accountable for these outcomes. Schools should be able to apply for dedicated funding to strengthen their wellbeing policies (action 5.6).

Teachers should be supported to improve the social and emotional wellbeing of children. Initial teacher education and professional development programs should be accredited using nationally consistent guidelines (action 5.3), and ongoing learning about child social and emotional development and wellbeing should form part of the ongoing professional development requirements for all teachers (action 5.4).



The *National School Reform Agreement*, which sets out governments' expectations for the education system, funding structures, and reporting requirements, should be updated to include student wellbeing as one of its outcomes. This would place wellbeing on an even footing with academic progress and student engagement as an important goal that schools across all sectors of the education system must work towards, and report on their progress. (volume 1, p. 19)

Young adults and tertiary students

People with mental illness who are disengaged from education and work should have increased access to Individual Placement and Support services to help them work in regular jobs, supporting their recovery (action 19.4).

Institutional support for tertiary students with mental ill-health needs improvement:

- Tertiary education institutions should be required to have a student mental health and wellbeing strategy — including staff training — as a condition for their registration (action 6.3).
- Online services for student mental health should be expanded to meet student needs (action 6.1).
- Institutions should arrange for international students to have health insurance that covers any required mental health treatment (action 6.2).

