



STATEMENT ON THE PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION INTERIM REPORT INTO THE NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION AGREEMENT

The National Mental Health Consumer Alliance (the Alliance) welcomes the release of the Productivity Commission's *Interim Report into the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement*. This review presents a critical opportunity to reorient Australia's mental health system toward one that prioritises **wellbeing, dignity, and human rights—not just economic productivity**.

As the national voice for people living with mental health challenges, the Alliance engaged deeply with this review through our federated structure: bringing together state and territory peaks, Consumer Advisory Groups, and national expert panels. Our message to the Commission was clear: **Australia's current approach to mental health reform is failing to deliver real outcomes for the people it claims to serve.**

Key Failings Identified by Consumers

Drawing on lived experience from across the country, our submission outlined systemic issues that continue to cause harm:

- Overreliance on the medical model, with limited investment in rights-based, trauma-informed, peer-led care
- Inadequate access to psychosocial supports, especially for people excluded from the NDIS
- Exclusion of consumer-led and culturally safe services from long-term and core funding streams
- A disproportionate focus on productivity, rather than wellbeing, safety, autonomy, and choice
- Limited consumer leadership in decision-making, governance, and funding processes.



Our Recommendations to the Commission

We called for urgent, structural reform grounded in lived expertise and human rights. Key recommendations included:

1. Establishing a National Mental Health Chief Consumer Officer with equal authority to clinical leads
2. Investing in peer-led, non-coercive alternatives to hospital-based crisis care
3. Enacting national human rights legislation to protect mental health consumers from coercion and discrimination
4. Resourcing consumer-led peaks at national and state levels to lead—not just participate in—system reform

These are not new asks. They reflect decades of advocacy from the mental health consumer movement.

What the Productivity Commission's Interim Report Says

The Productivity Commission agrees with what consumers have been saying, that the system is “fundamentally flawed”, and a new approach is needed to deliver real and meaningful change.

It found, categorically, that while the Agreement delivered on outputs it has failed to deliver real outcomes for people living with mental health challenges.

The Commission called for **immediate action to address psychosocial supports** outside of National Disability Insurance Scheme for the 500,000 Australians with mental health challenges identified in the Unmet Needs report were left without support.

Most significantly the Interim Report called for a fundamental shift in how the next national agreement is formed, saying that it must be **co-designed with consumers and our allies**. The Commission also recommended the next agreement form the foundations for outcome-based funding.



“Our consultation shows that people involved in the system know what needs to change. The new Agreement needs to be delivered with them not just for them” Commissioner Button said.

To advance genuine and transparent co-design design with people with lived experience, the Commission is recommending the deadline for the new Agreement be extended to 2027- and allocating time and resources for meaningful representation, and **shared decision-making**, for and with consumers, carers and their allies.

We welcome the Commissioners’ recommendations for the next agreement to articulate formal roles, and resources, for the Alliance in its governance arrangements, and for the Alliance’s member organisations.

Additionally, the report identifies that the current Agreement does not include any specific actions to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Alliance supports the Interim Reports recommendation that, as with other Agreements, a separate schedule needs to be included to *“recognise the factors affecting the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Organisations and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander SEWB workforce, and the need to promote cultural safety in all services”*

We wholeheartedly embrace these recommendations: now is the time for genuine power-sharing, structural inclusion, and investment in consumer leadership.

What’s Next?

The Productivity Commission will be seeking feedback on its Interim Report which is due 31 July. The Commission will also be holding public hearings in July and August 2025.



“The Alliance, alongside other consumer peaks and people with lived experience, will ensure our voices are heard loud and clear.

The final report is due in October 2025 and will directly shape the next National Mental Health Agreement, which, if the government accepts the Commissions’ recommendations will be extended until 2027.

This is a critical moment in history- and the Alliance acknowledges the tireless advocacy of consumers, past and present who have fought to have our voices heard.

We now have a real opportunity to move beyond rhetoric and deliver the transformation our communities have long demanded—and deeply deserve.

