

Interim Report of the National of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement Review

Summary of yourtown's advocacy submission 2025



What is it about?

The Productivity Commission has developed an interim report detailing the initial findings and draft recommendations from its review of the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement. The review evaluates the effectiveness of programs implemented under the Agreement and proposes improvements to strengthen the mental health and suicide prevention systems to make them more accessible, affordable, safe, and impactful.

Why is it important?

The Productivity Commission's review is critical because it assesses whether the Agreement truly enables collaboration across sectors, identifies gaps such as its current health-focused approach, and guides governments toward integrated evidence-based early intervention supports to prevent mental illness and reduce suicide. This highlights the need for tailored support that reaches children and young people at crucial developmental stages.

Some of yourtown's key messages:

1. Integrating digital mental health solutions to drive systemic reform

The current Agreement is fragmented, underfunded, and not fit for purpose. Digital counselling and support services such as Kids Helpline play a vital role in meeting young people where they are, including in ways that they find safe and accessible. The next Agreement should actively integrate and fund digital mental health programs and services that reflect 21st-century help-seeking preferences, particularly those that enable children and young people to access support when they need it and in the format they choose.

2. Establishing equitable funding models for national mental health service integration

National services like Kids Helpline provide vital, accessible, and after-hours support to children and young people across Australia; yet they remain excluded from bilateral funding agreements, leading to inconsistent integration in state and regional planning. To address rising demand and service gaps, especially during critical after-hours periods, governments must embed these services into funding frameworks to ensure coordinated, nationwide access to early intervention and crisis care.

3. Implementing interim funding measures until the next Agreement

Extending the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement to mid 2027 will enable co-designed reforms, but without interim funding, services like Kids Helpline risk exclusion and cannot meet growing after-hours need. Governments must embed and fund these services in regional and state plans to ensure uninterrupted mental health support for young Australians.

4. Prioritising and funding evidence-based early intervention supports

The Agreement references age appropriate care but does not prioritise early intervention for those under 25 years. This is despite mental health and substance use disorders constituting their greatest disease burden, 36% of which is preventable. Governments must fund universal, developmentally tailored supports, and integrated, measurable early intervention programs.

5. Allocating investment to expand community-based youth postvention support

Postvention support for young people is inconsistent, often leaving them discharged from clinical care without safety plans, referrals, or follow-up, which increases the risk of relapse. Services like Kids Helpline provide 24/7 counselling, personalised safety planning, and bereavement support, filling crucial gaps in continuity of care. The next National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement must mandate and fund standardised postvention protocols to ensure all vulnerable youth receive age-appropriate aftercare.

6. Implementing whole-of-government early intervention policies for children and young people

The next Agreement must adopt a whole-of-government early intervention strategy that moves beyond a focus on health alone to embed mental health promotion across families, schools, tertiary institutions, community clubs, digital platforms, and employment services. By investing in evidence based supports such as early years development programs, school based mental health literacy initiatives, and specialised assessment tools and training for employment service staff, governments can detect and address vulnerabilities and intersecting risks like bullying and unemployment and build resilience before crises arise. This cross-sector, developmentally appropriate approach will ensure that young Australians receive timely care co-designed with them and tailored to their unique needs and stages of life.

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