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National Mental Health Commission
Australian Government

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Vision 2030 Roadmap for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

What is your experience or connection with the mental health system in Australia?

The Australian Psychological Society (APS) is the peak professional organisation for psychologists in Australia representing over 25,000 members.

The APS is proud to represent its members and works collaboratively with governments and other stakeholders to enhance the health and wellbeing of the Australian community. The APS has a long history of advocating for change to the mental health system, particularly for mental health to be considered as important as physical health.

The APS seeks to help people achieve positive change so they can confidently contribute their best to the community. Psychologists are experts in human behaviour and use evidence-based psychological interventions to prevent people from becoming unwell, improve human performance and productivity in the workplace, and assist people to overcome mental and physical illness and optimise their health and functioning in the community. Economic evaluations highlight the cost-effectiveness of psychological interventions to prevent people from becoming mentally unwell, and to treat a range of mental health symptoms and disorders when they do occur.

Our Members have a broad range of expertise in human behaviour that enables them to undertake assessments and deliver evidence-based psychological interventions within the mental health service delivery sector, but also more broadly in schools, correctional facilities, workplaces, welfare agencies, and sporting organisations. They are familiar with the widespread impact of mental illness on individuals, their families, friends and carers, as well as the broader community and future generations. APS members also understand the range of individual, work, social, community and economic factors that contribute to poor mental health outcomes. They are committed to system-level improvements that will help prevent mental illness from developing and also enable people experiencing mental illness to lead a fulfilling and productive life.

What best describes your organisation's area of work?

Mental health, Suicide prevention, Disability, Alcohol and other drugs, Education, Policy, Non-government, Other - please specify If you selected other.

The APS represents, educates and guides our members in all areas of psychological practice. We develop evidence-based policies on multiple topics impacting mental health, grounded in best-practice research and current thinking based on ongoing consultation with relevant experts. We also advocate for reform on behalf of our members and the wider community including for mental health, suicide prevention, disability, alcohol and drugs, education, policy and within the non-government sector.

Is there any information about your organisation you would like to provide?

The APS has been instrumental in providing advice to government and non-government organisations regarding mental health for over 30 years. APS members are required to abide by principles of professional conduct, responsibilities and confidentiality, and a majority are registered health professionals with the Psychology Board of Australia. We have provided extensive input to the recent Productivity Commission report via five submissions, and have strong ties with the National Mental Health Commission through several consultation and submissions on a variety of issues.

PART TWO: Priorities

Do you agree with the identified priorities?

Yes

How would you rank these priorities?

1. Delivering quality, personalised care
2. Facilitating access
3. Working together
4. Improving wellbeing
5. Harnessing information
6. Building community-based care

What do you see as the main challenge with implementing the Vision 2030 priorities?

The Productivity Commission's Final Report highlights the significant structural changes required to enact mental health reforms in Australia by adopting a 'whole of government' holistic approach. It is important that the implementation of Vision 2030 priorities builds on the recommendations of the PC, and the considerable improvements may emerge from the further consultation. The APS is preparing a response to the Australian Government in relation to the Productivity Commission's Final Recommendations. The main challenge for the implementation of the Vision 2030 roadmap will be to ensure consistency across the system, in particular:

- Consistent definition and measurement: Extensive work is required to ensure that the intended outcomes from the Productivity Commission's Inquiry are appropriately defined and able to be measured. In particular, we are interested in recommendations for reform focused on identifying social and non-financial benefits.
- A 'whole of government' approach across multiple jurisdictions and policy frameworks: To achieve the best mental health outcomes for our

members and the wider community, we reiterate the need for nationally consistent, evidence-based decision-making across the mental health system, as per our previous submissions to policymakers. In particular, we are keen to ensure that the Vision 2030 reform agenda enhances the recommendations the APS has supported from the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Mental Health. Co-ordinated and wholesale uptake across many stakeholders will be required to approve and implement the required changes.

- Ensuring consumers are matched to appropriately qualified health professionals across the spectrum: There needs to be careful consideration about the roles and clarity of each professional providing interventions within the mental health care system. In particular ensuring that the right care is provided by the right professional at the right time.
- Governance and Funding changes across different fiscal regimes: Changes will need to be consistently implemented across States, Territories and the Commonwealth. Additionally, other sectors including non-government organisations, PHN's and LHN's etc. will also need to have consistent understandings to enable a successful implementation.

PART THREE: Opportunities

Does Roadmap have the right opportunities to achieve Vision 2030?

Yes

Are there other opportunities you would like included?

The APS is still conducting a policy analysis on the Productivity Commission's Final Report and we welcome the opportunity to share our analysis. The APS understands that Vision 2030 incorporates recommendations from the Productivity Commission, however there are opportunities to strengthen Vision 2030 that can be garnered from the Productivity Commission's Inquiry and Report. From our initial analysis of the Productivity Commission's Final Report, we have identified the following Vision 2030 opportunities which could be further strengthened:

- Stigma reduction & reducing suicide-risk: We support moving from a stigma-reduction strategy towards a national social inclusiveness strategy which would not only address stigma, but also reduce social exclusion by building on the social determinants of health. We feel this strategy could also improve social participation across vulnerable population groups including those experiencing disability or illness, or higher suicide-risk such as Indigenous communities. This would constitute a more holistic refocus on the multifaceted nature of breaking down barriers to social inclusion while also promoting social connectedness.
- Workplace initiatives to promote psychological health and safety: The APS support the opportunity to uplift psychological health and safety and bring it on par with physical health and safety. There is significantly more work required in this area to enable change on the ground, including cultural shifts within workplaces. Translating these requirements into implementation would require employers to be provided fit-for-purpose strategies to meet their obligations, and address

psychosocial risk factors across primary, secondary and tertiary intervention levels.

- Incentivising organizational practices: The APS supports opportunities to incentivise organizational practices which enhance mental health and wellbeing, including access to lower insurance premiums. However we believe that these practices should be independently reviewed, and overseen by registered mental health professionals.
- Prevention & Early Intervention in Schools: There is a need to provide a more coordinated approach to wellbeing in schools and role clarity across the workforce. For example, the broad skills of psychologists are underused with schools and integrating them more fully across the school has a high potential to improve outcomes for education staff, students, and the whole school community.
- Proactive Engagement in Justice Settings: The intersection between mental health and the justice sector begins with policing and courts, there is a need for more comprehensive screening at the point of a person's contact with the justice sector, and not just within correctional settings.

What impact will the proposed opportunities and priorities have on you or your organisation?

The psychology workforce is the largest mental health workforce in Australia, and psychologists work across numerous sectors and in diverse roles. Vision 2030 will have a significant impact on the profession and workforce, spanning a broad range of areas such as services delivery, policy making and responding to regulatory changes.

What can be done immediately or must be done first?

We would recommend that all key stakeholder groups are able to work together to ensure that the implementation of the Vision 2030 Roadmap is consistent with the intention of the reform agenda put forward by the Productivity Commission.

PART FOUR: General

How would you like to see the Roadmap integrated with ongoing policy and reform?

A cohesive and systematic strategy is required to align all policy and reform agendas. A consistent approach to policymaking will provide clarity on the targets that both policymakers and service providers must achieve, in order to implement the reform.

We welcome views not covered by the questions above. Do you have any further comments or suggestions?

The APS is in the process of preparing a full analysis of the Productivity Commission's Final Report and welcome the opportunity to collaborate with the National Mental Health Commission to implement mental health system reforms.