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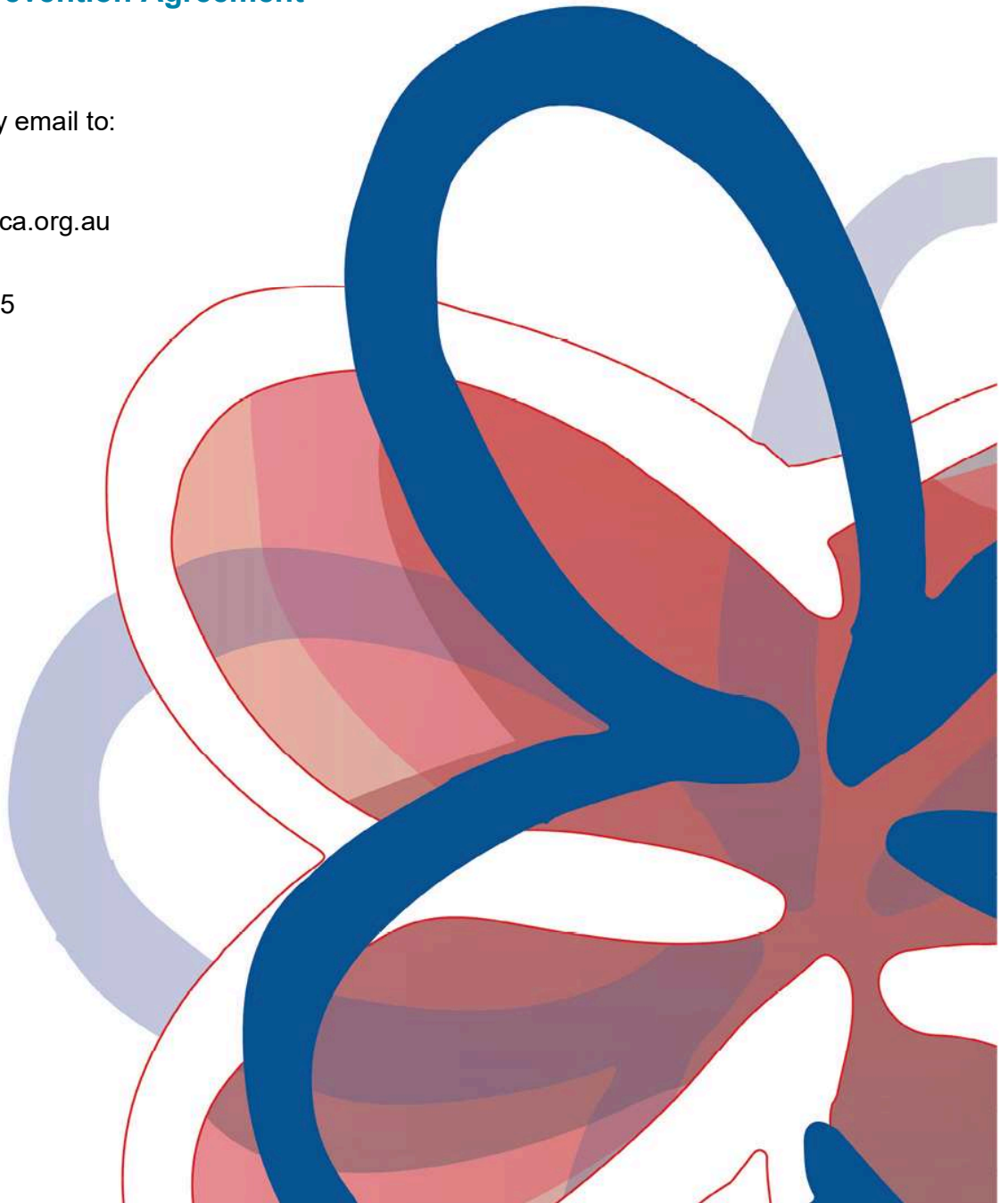
**Submission:**

**Productivity Commission's Final  
Review of National Mental Health &  
Suicide Prevention Agreement**

Submitted by email to:

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3 March 2025



## **Submission: Productivity Commission's Final Review of National Mental Health & Suicide Prevention Agreement.**

This submission has been prepared by the ACT Mental Health Consumer Network (the Network) in response to the invitation from the National Mental Health & Consumer Alliance (NMHCA).

### **Acknowledgment of Country**

We wish to acknowledge the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the land upon which we sit and recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region. We wish to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region. We would also like to acknowledge and welcome other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may be reading this submission, and we recognise the ongoing contributions of all Indigenous peoples to ACT society and Australia more broadly.

### **The ACT Mental Health Consumer Network**

The Network is a consumer-led peak organisation representing the interests of mental health consumers in the ACT in policy and decision-making forums. The Network is committed to social justice and the inclusion of people with experience of mental illness. Run by consumers for consumers, our aim is to advocate for services and supports for mental health consumers which better enable them to live fuller, healthier and more valued lives in the community.

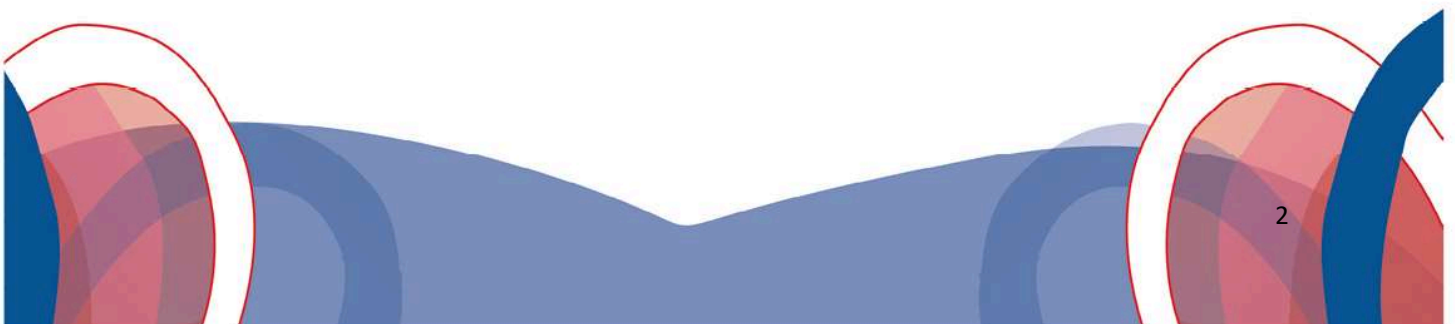
A consumer consultation was held, and feedback was sought in relation to the above mentioned Agreement.

### **General comments.**

The Network welcomes this opportunity to contribute to the Productivity Commission's Final Review on the National Mental Health & Suicide Prevention Agreement (the Agreement). Due to the number and complex nature of the questions provided in the Productivity Commission's scope of inquiry, two questions were chosen and revised to generate consumer feedback regarding the impact of the Agreement for the services it funded.

#### Question 1:

**Original question:** a) The impact of mental health and suicide prevention programs and services delivered under the National Agreement to Australia's wellbeing and



productivity

**Focus group question:** What impact have you seen from mental health and suicide prevention programs under the National Agreement?

Consumers remarked that Head to Health, now called Medicare Mental Health Centres, have been a good service and a useful resource, particularly within the ACT. Similarly, Headspace was also cited to have been beneficial, particularly with their holistic approach to care.

In contrast, consumers stated that they experience long wait times to reach someone at Lifeline, the service most widely recommended for immediate mental health support. Although there are other services available, such as BeyondBlue and the Suicide Callback Service, these do not appear to be as well known. It was also stressed that while online services may be effective, they cannot and must not be used to replace face-to-face services.

#### Question 2:

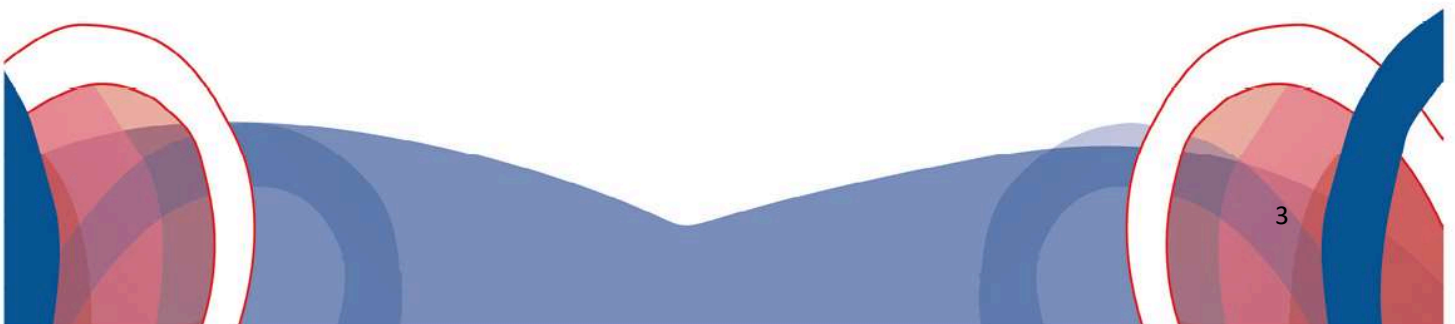
**Original question:** e) whether any unintended consequences have occurred such as cost shifting, inefficiencies or adverse consumer outcomes

**Focus group question:** Have there been any unintended consequences that have occurred, such as insufficiencies or adverse outcomes? Are there any programs or services missing?

One of the main elements that consumers felt was missing was a recognition of lived experience and a focus on human elements. People with lived experience of mental illness often experience not feeling heard or not being able to identify with health workers within programs and services. Consumers proposed that care should be person-centred with a focus on recovery and considered that skilled peer workers are best placed to improve this issue. However, consumers acknowledged the difficulties that may exist in relation to training, employment and retention of peer workers.

#### **Conclusion**

These recommendations are based on consumer feedback provided to enhance the Agreement. In summary, consumers have had positive experiences with the national services and programs that they have had experience with but indicated that gaps still existed even within these services that need to be addressed. Other available



services should be more widely promoted so the public is aware of these services. Overall, consumers consider that the Agreement lacks a person-centred focus and feel there should be more use of and emphasis on the peer workforce.

