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**PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION DRAFT REPORT CONFIRMS
 URGENT NEED FOR SIGNIFICANT MENTAL HEALTH REFORMS**

AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, said today that the Productivity Commission Draft Report into Mental Health is a welcome catalyst for much-needed political, sectoral, and community debate and discussion to urgently reshape our mental health system to better meet growing and more complex demand.

“The Commission's draft report highlights the extent of mental illness in Australia and the extent of the reforms needed to build a better mental health system,” Dr Bartone said.

“We note it is a draft report and further detail is required to ensure that any solutions are appropriately and clearly resourced, and there is no additional paperwork or burdensome bureaucratic processes to overcome to access appropriate care for our patients.

“The AMA will also be seeking assurances there are no plans or recommendations to move away from current private sector models, especially specialist psychiatric care.

“We must ensure that appropriate non-GP specialist referrals are not a casualty of any reform.

“The draft report puts the cost to the Australian economy of mental ill-health and suicide at around \$43 to \$51 billion per year, and that is a conservative estimate.

“In addition, the Productivity Commission says that approximately \$130 billion in associated costs are expended.”

The draft report notes:

- In any year, approximately one in five Australians will experience some form of mental ill-health.
- Many Australians are able to manage their mental health needs but for those who need mental health treatment, they are not always able to receive the type of care they need.
- The failures in the system to help those in need means too many people are experiencing "preventable physical and mental distress, relationship breakdown, stigma, and loss of life satisfaction and opportunities".
- The PC draft reiterates that mental illness is a young person's condition, with 75 per cent of those who develop mental illness experiencing mental illness before the age of 25 years.

Dr Bartone said that the draft report seeks to recommend to governments and policymakers where investments are needed.

“We must build a mental health system based on accountability and evaluation of programs so we know who is responsible for mental health care and how resources and funding are allocated,” Dr Bartone said.

“The Productivity Commission says there is a lack of awareness about what constitutes mental illness and what types of services and supports are available.

“We welcome the call for ‘*clear gateways into mental health care*’ and more effective ways to find out about services and supports to help individuals and their families and friends navigate the range of mental health services available.

“One of the key findings is the need for better coordination between psychosocial supports, housing services, the justice system, workplaces, and social security.

“The AMA welcomes the necessary public consultation process and the opportunity for general practitioners, public and private psychiatrists, other mental health professionals and workers, and most importantly, people with mental illness and their families to respond to this draft report,” Dr Bartone said.

The Productivity Commission Draft Report on Mental Health is available at:

<https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/current/mental-health/draft/mental-health-draft-overview.pdf>

<https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/current/mental-health/draft/mental-health-draft-volume1.pdf>

<https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/current/mental-health/draft/mental-health-draft-volume2.pdf>

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