

# PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health and Aged Care

Senate Community Affairs References Committee

## Inquiry into the Assessment and support services for people with ADHD

PDR Number: IQ23-000083

**Advice on the best practice approach for all stages of the ADHD assessment and treatment process**

**Written**

**Senator:** Janet Rice

**Question:**

As part of its inquiry, the committee has been tasked with examining ways of improving existing ADHD assessment and support pathways. The committee therefore seeks your organisation's expert advice on what it considers to be the best practice approach for all stages of the ADHD assessment and treatment process—from initial assessment and diagnosis, through to medication (as required) and other treatment, as well as ongoing support and treatment plans.

The committee would welcome receiving your organisation's response in the best way you see fit. The committee is aware that the process has been presented in other forums as a flow diagram, in support of accompanying text.[1] You may choose to respond in a similar way.

The committee suggests that any proposed pathways should take a person-centred approach, with your response indicating your views on which body or organisation should be responsible for providing the service or support, and where government support should be provided (e.g. Medicare, PBS).

The committee would also appreciate any expert views your organisation may have into the separate pathway needs of children who are suspected of having ADHD.

**Answer:**

To support the provision of best-practice assessment, diagnosis, treatment and management services for people with ADHD, \$1.5 million was provided to the Australian ADHD Professionals Association (AADPA) to develop the *Australian Evidence-Based Clinical Practice Guideline for ADHD* (Guideline).

The Guideline aims to promote accurate and timely diagnosis, and provide guidance on optimal and consistent assessment and treatment of ADHD. The Guideline was launched by the Minister for Health and Aged Care, the Hon Mark Butler MP on 5 October 2022 and has been endorsed by the National Health and Medical Research Council. The Guideline is available via <https://adhdguideline.aadpa.com.au/>.

As part of the development of the Guidelines, the AADPA developed a set of underlying principles and assumptions which were to be read in parallel to the Guidelines. In line with the committees assumption, the assumption of 'Best Practice' suggests a person-centred approach, as outlined below:

*Best-practice principles include individualised plans developed in accordance with principles of co-production, where people with ADHD, families and carers are at the centre of decision-making about all aspects of their healthcare. This requires advocacy, attentive listening, engagement in integrated care pathways that foster continuity of care, the exercise of choice and meaningful informed consent, compassion, empowerment, hope, transparency and partnership. The best approach to clinical practice will therefore be person-centred and will promote the independence of the person with ADHD. It will also be inclusive, provide choice and give control and include other stakeholders. Best practice also requires a trauma-informed approach and enables supported decision making. Best practice should also follow the latest evidence-based guidance wherever this is evidence is available*

In addition to the above, the Guideline also outlines a roadmap for ADHD clinical practice, research and policy, now and in the future, with a focus on everyday functioning and quality of life for care based on age, gender, culture, setting and geography of people who are living with ADHD, and those who support them. The Guideline makes 132 recommendations regarding ADHD, including recommendations that should be taken into account by governments, services providers, educators and others.

As you are aware, the Department of Health and Aged Care (the department) also made a submission to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee *Inquiry into barriers to consistent, timely and best practice assessment of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and support services for people with ADHD* (Inquiry). This submission outlines all current Australian Government funded initiatives to support ADHD assessment and support pathways, and includes reference to opportunities to implement relevant recommendations from the Guideline in the context of the Government's broader primary care and mental health reforms.

Importantly, the provision of mental health services, including ADHD assessment and support pathways, is the responsibility of all governments and the health sector more broadly. All governments have committed to working together to reduce system fragmentation, gaps and duplication across the public and private sectors; and across prevention, primary and secondary care specialist settings with an increased focus on prevention, early intervention and effective management of severe and enduring conditions in the community and tertiary settings.

The National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement (National Agreement), which came into effect March 2022, sets out clear roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for the funding and delivery of mental health and suicide prevention services across the entire mental healthcare and suicide prevention system.

State and territory governments are generally responsible for providing health and emergency services including through the public hospital system. This includes public hospital mental health services for people with severe and persistent mental illness, as well as specialist community-based mental health services and responding to people in suicidal distress.

Shared responsibilities between governments include commitments to addressing existing gaps in funding of community-based mental health services, integrating systems and services to encourage seamless treatment, and supporting priority populations.

The National Agreement and associated bilateral schedules are publicly available at: [https://federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/sites/federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/files/2022-05/nmh\\_suicide\\_prevention\\_agreement.pdf](https://federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/sites/federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/files/2022-05/nmh_suicide_prevention_agreement.pdf).