

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
SOCIAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO
2016-2017 Additional Estimates Hearings

Outcome Number: 2.1 Families and Communities

Question No: SQ17-000252

Topic: 1800RESPECT

Hansard page: Written

Senator Louise Pratt asked:

Does the government believe that, because there is a contractor-subcontractor arrangement in place, with a contractor standing between the commonwealth and the ultimate service provider, the commonwealth is somehow not responsible for ensuring that Australian victims of domestic violence get high-quality, expert trauma counselling?

Answer:

No. The Government is committed to ensuring 1800RESPECT is a high quality service and has demonstrated this through both its increased financial investment in the service and its commitment to improving the service for victims of domestic and family violence. We have supported the service to grow in recent years and it is now an integral part of the wider service system supporting individuals experiencing, or at risk of, domestic and family violence and sexual assault, their family, friends, and sector professionals seeking information. The 1800RESPECT service has been expanded to include telephone and online counselling, support for frontline workers, the DAISY App, and a digital platform including a website and webinars.

As a direct result of the implementation of a first response triage model, the Government now has confidence that 1800RESPECT is delivering a high quality service. Since the introduction of the triage model, between October and December 2016 92 per cent of calls were answered (18,024 calls received, and 16,499 answered), compared to the same period in 2015, where only 17 per cent of calls were answered (17,585 calls received and 2,969 calls answered).

Under the new model, all calls are answered by first response counsellors who are qualified, professional and experienced. The counsellors have a minimum three year tertiary degree in a relevant field that includes Social Services, Social Work, Welfare Studies, Psychology and Counselling. All counsellors are also required to have a minimum of two years full time counselling experience. All counsellors are trained in providing trauma informed support. As part of the model, if a caller needs trauma specialist support they are transferred to a specialist trauma counsellor. This process is referred to as a warm-referral in which the first response counsellor will stay on the line to transfer the caller to the specialist counsellor. This ensures the caller remains supported and does not need to retell their story.