

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: SQ17-000255

Topic: 1800RESPECT

Hansard page: Written

Senator Louise Pratt asked:

Does the Minister consider that notifying RDVSA on Tuesday morning that the EOI process closes at 3 pm on the Friday of the same week is reasonable?

Answer:

Medibank Health Solutions (MHS) has legal and procurement teams overseeing the tender process. MHS is following strict probity requirements set by an independent probity adviser engaged to assist with the procurement.

All organisations, including Rape and Domestic Violence Service Australia (R&DVSA), were given four days to submit basic information for the Expression of Interest (EOI) about their proven expertise, capacity and experience in delivering trauma specialist counselling by telephone to demonstrate that they would be able to meet the requirements of the tender.

The independent probity adviser hired by MHS to oversee the tender process advised that the timeframes for the EOI were commensurate with the level of information required.

As explained in the EOI documentation, this was only a preliminary stage to assess interest.

Selected organisations were then invited by MHS to submit a full tender and have been given approximately 30 business days to prepare and submit these documents. This has provided organisations with the opportunity to fully demonstrate their claims against the criteria.

MHS has assured the Department of Social Services (the Department) that R&DVSA has been kept well advised about the possibility of an open tender process being conducted for the trauma specialist counselling service.

As per the contract the Department has with MHS, it is up to MHS to determine the subcontracting arrangements for the 1800RESPECT service. The subcontract between MHS and R&DVSA has always been due to end on 30 June 2017.

The Department has been advised by MHS that the possibility of conducting a tender process for the trauma specialist counselling component of 1800RESPECT had been raised with the Executive Officer of R&DVSA on several occasions. MHS advised that the General Manager of 1800RESPECT met with R&DVSA's Executive Officer on 3 January 2017 and advised that MHS was considering options for the future sub-contracting arrangement, which included directly negotiating with R&DVSA or conducting a tender. On 1 February 2017 the Relationship Director at MHS, also advised R&DVSA's Executive Officer that MHS was still considering these options, and undertook to personally advise R&DVSA's Executive Officer as soon as MHS reached a decision regarding this matter.

The Department has also been advised that on 13 February 2017, the Relationship Director for MHS met with R&DVSA's Executive Officer to give notice that a tender process would be undertaken, and in particular, advise that the EOI stage would open the following morning and encouraged R&DVSA to respond. The tender was advertised on Tenders Online on 14 February 2017, and all potentially interested parties, including R&DVSA, were notified in writing that same day that the EOI details had been made public. Expressions of Interest from all interested parties were due on 17 February 2017.