

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2011-2012, 30 & 31 May and 1 June 2012

Question: E12-184

OUTCOME 11: Mental Health

Topic: Suicide Prevention

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Number of pages: 1

Senator: Senator Wright

Question:

Has any consideration been given to developing a uniform definition of suicide and to standardise coronial legislation and Police practices to improve state and territory reporting of suicide?

Answer:

As there is no coronial jurisdiction at the Commonwealth level, issues of coronial legislation, or changes to police practices, are matters for states and territories.

Separate to the requirements of coronial legislation, statistical coding as per the World Health Organisation's International Classification of Diseases requires a coroner's determination of death as intentional self-harm to be allocated a suicide code (X60-X84, or Y87.0).

Under the new coding guidelines introduced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) in 2010, in addition to coroner-determined suicides deaths may also be coded as suicide following further investigation of information on the National Coroners Information System.

In the context of mechanisms to support the identification of suicide clusters and trends, the Australian Suicide Prevention Advisory Council has noted the work undertaken by the National Coroners Information System on a standardised national police form and provided advice to the Minister for Mental Health and Ageing, the Hon Mark Butler MP, on this issue.

This matter has since been referred to the Commonwealth Attorney General for consideration and, as appropriate, referral to Standing Committee of Law and Justice for discussion.