

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2012-2013, 30 & 31 May and 1 June 2012

Question: E12-196

OUTCOME 11: Mental Health

Topic: Lack of Access to Mental Health Services in Rural Areas

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Number of pages: 2

Senator: Senator Wright

Question:

The prevalence of mental health conditions in rural and remote Australia has been estimated as equivalent to levels in major cities. However, rural Australians face greater challenges as a result of difficulty accessing the support needed and the greater visibility and stigma attached to mental health in a smaller community. In particular, the problem is accentuated for people living in rural areas that are likely to have fewer health professionals, a much smaller choice of health service providers and scarce community support services.

- a) In last year's budget, \$2.2 billion was allocated to various mental health reforms, some of which have been announced over the past year. I would like to know the total amount that has been allocated to rural mental health services under this reform package?
- b) Can you also provide details of the total amount to date that has been expended on rural mental health services under this reform package?
- c) Can you provide details of the total annual amounts of expenditure in relation to specific rural mental health initiatives over the past 5 years?
- d) I am particularly keen to hear details about any new rural mental health initiatives contained in the 2012-13 Budget. Can you list all the new rural mental health measures contained in this year's Budget?
- e) Can you please provide details of the total amount allocated under this year's Budget to those new rural mental health initiatives?

Answer:

a) and b)

The 2011-12 Budget Delivering National Mental Health Reform package comprises a number of national initiatives. Many of these initiatives will provide services to rural areas, but it is not possible to accurately determine the amount of funding dedicated to rural mental health services under this package.

Initiatives with a national focus that also address the needs of people living in rural and remote areas include:

- Access to Allied Psychological Services (ATAPS) - the 2011-12 Budget included \$206 million over five years to expand ATAPS to better reach groups who continue to miss out on Medicare funded services, such as: people in rural and regional areas and low income areas; Indigenous Australians; young people under 25 years; and other hard to reach groups. Approximately 41 per cent of ATAPS services delivered to date were provided in rural and remote Australia.
 - headspace - funded since 2006, headspace provides a nationally coordinated focus on youth mental health and related drug and alcohol problems. The 2011-12 Budget allocated \$197.3 million over five years to expand existing and establish new youth focused mental health services through the headspace program. To date, 31 of the 55 sites announced have been in regional and rural locations around Australia.
 - eheadspace – in addition to the roll-out of further headspace sites, a telephone and web-based support service for young people building on the headspace platform is also available.
 - e-mental health - funding is being provided to establish a virtual clinic and an online portal. The portal is available at mindhealthconnect.org.au. The virtual clinic services will complement face-to-face mental health support and existing automated online programs. The clinic will employ allied mental health workers and psychiatrists, will have the capacity to escalate care in high needs cases and will be operational in late 2012.
 - New programs currently under development, such as Partners in Recovery and Early Psychosis Prevention and Intervention Centres will also provide services to people in rural and remote areas. Once established, the Partners in Recovery Initiative will aim to improve the system response to, and outcomes for, people with severe and persistent mental illness with complex needs. The Early Psychosis Prevention and Intervention Centres will address the needs of people aged 15-24 years with a first episode of psychosis and facilitate early identification and treatment.
 - The Support for Day to Day Living in the Community program, which was expanded as part of the 2011-12 Budget, also assists people living in rural and remote areas. The program seeks to improve the quality of life for individuals with severe and persistent mental illness by providing places in structured and socially based activities.
 - Taking Action to Tackle Suicide – the Government has allocated \$30.2 million over four years from 2011-12 to reach populations groups at higher risk of suicide including those in rural and remote areas.
- c) The only specific rural mental health service program is the Mental Health Services in Rural and Remote Areas (MHSRRA) program. The following table outlines the annual expenditure on the MHSRRA program over the past five years:

2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12*
\$13.459	\$11.248	\$13.065	\$15.553	\$14.941

*expenditure amounts are GST exclusive

d) and e)

The 2012-13 Budget did not provide funding for any other specific rural mental health initiatives. MHSRRA is an ongoing program with \$16.1 million (GST exclusive) allocated in 2012-13.