

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 -199

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:

- a) In the Treasurer's Budget overview, the Government says it is "investing \$61 billion in 2012-13 in Australia's health care system, an estimated 37 per cent increase on 2007-08 levels" and "an additional \$19.8 billion in reforms to public hospital funding over the period to 2019-20." Is this correct – does this year's Budget invest a total amount of \$61 billion into health services?
- b) Of this \$61 billion, can you tell me what percentage is directed towards mental health services generally and rural mental health services specifically?

Answer:

a) Yes.

b)

The Department of Health and Ageing mental health specific allocation in 2012-13 is \$1.2 billion (2.1 per cent). This figure includes projections for expenditure on Medicare Benefits Schedule items, but excludes estimates for some other services and items such as psychiatric medications through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) (\$771.5 million in 2009-10) and funding to states for appropriation within their own health systems allocated to mental health services, which requires a data verification process. The most recently verified data is published in the 2012 Report on Government Services.

The Department funds two programs specifically designed to target primary mental health service delivery towards hard to reach population groups, including people living in rural and remote locations: the Access to Allied Psychological Services (ATAPS) and the Mental Health Services in Rural and Remote Areas (MHSRRA).

As part of the \$1.2 billion mental health allocation in 2012-13, \$74.7 million is allocated for ATAPS nationally, and \$16.2 million for MHSRRA.

Other mental health programs, managed by the Department, provide services to rural areas including headspace, the Mental Health Nurse Incentive Program and the Better Access to Psychiatrists, and Psychologists and GPs through the Medicare Benefits Schedule (Better

Access) initiative, which represents the largest expenditure on specific mental health services to all populations, excluding psychiatric medications through the PBS.