

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: E12-360

OUTCOME 12: Health Workforce Capacity

Topic: Mental Health Workers

Type of Question: Hansard Page 120, Wednesday 30 May 2012

Number of pages: 1

Senator: Senator Wright

Question:

Are there programs or initiatives to provide support, assistance or training to GPs to respond to demand particularly in relation to providing specialised mental health work.

Answer:

Under the Better Access to Psychiatrists, Psychologists and General Practitioners through the Medicare Benefits Schedule (Better Access) initiative, funding is available for education and training activities to help ensure General Practitioners (GPs) are equipped to recognise and treat mental illness.

In particular, funding is provided to the General Practice Mental Health Standards Collaboration (GPMHSC) to develop, monitor and promote quality standards for GP education and training in primary mental health care.

The GPMHSC is a multidisciplinary body operating under the auspices of the RACGP, and with representatives from the RACGP, the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine, the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, the Australian Psychological Society, and consumer and carer representatives through the Mental Health Council of Australia. This body ensures relevant ongoing mental health education and training for GPs.

The GPMHSC establishes the standards for Mental Health Skills training for GPs and accredits courses provided against these standards.

Funding is also provided to the Mental Health Professionals Network (MHPN) to support local networks of multi-disciplinary mental health clinicians, including GPs.

The Australian Government also continues to support the mental health workforce through its involvement with the Mental Health Workforce Advisory Committee and initiatives such as the Mental Health Professionals Online Development (MHPOD) Program, which is an innovative web-based professional education tool which currently provides approximately seventy hours of material on forty five topics.