

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2013-14, 20 November 2013

Question: E13-210

OUTCOME: 11 – Mental Health

Topic: Older Australians and Access to Mental Health Services

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Siewert

Question:

The SANE report has demonstrated that some older Australians are unable to access mental health services. Are you aware of the report and its recommendations? Are you working on improving the delivery of services for older Australians in the following areas:

- GP training;
- Inclusion of older people in mental health surveys;
- Use of older people in peer to peer programs;
- Raising awareness of mental health needs within aged care sector and mandatory training for aged care staff;
- Targeted information for older Australians and their families.

Answer:

The Department of Health is aware of the SANE report Growing Older Staying Well and its recommendations. The Government funds a range of programmes to improve the delivery of services for older Australians as follows:

GP Training

A number of education and training projects have been funded to equip GPs to manage people with mental disorders. These include:

- online training on development of a Mental Health Treatment Plan which enables GP's to access the higher rebate under the Better Access Initiatives; and
- the Mental Health Professionals Network, which supports locally driven interdisciplinary mental health networks that promote collaborative practice and peer support amongst clinicians and service providers.

Inclusion of older people in mental health surveys

A number of national surveys collect information on the mental health and wellbeing of older Australians including:

- the National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing, conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) in 1997 and 2007, covers the adult population from 16-85 years. To improve reliability of estimates for older (65–85 years) persons, these age groups were given a higher chance of selection in the household person selection process.

- the National Health Survey, conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, also covers mental health and wellbeing for Australians aged 18 years and over. The Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, conducted by the ABS, collects information from people with disability, carers and older people to determine not only how ageing impacts on a person's life, but how the combination of age and other factors affect the quality of life a person experiences.

Use of older people in peer to peer programs

The Department provides funding to *beyondblue*: the national depression and anxiety initiative, which contributes to a wide range of national mental health awareness and promotion activities. The *beyond maturityblues* program, which commenced in 2007, is a peer education program conducted in partnership with Councils on the Ageing around Australia. Around 100,000 older people from all around Australia have attended a *beyond maturityblues* session.

Raising awareness of mental health needs within aged care sector and mandatory training for aged care staff

Under the Mental Health First Aid for Frontline Community Workers Initiative, the Department funds Wesley Mission to provide mental health first aid training with a suicide focus to Aged Care Nurses and Workers in up to 40 regions nationally.

With funding from the Department, *beyondblue* also has two streams of work underway aimed at raising the awareness of mental health needs within the aged care sector:

- the Professional Education to Aged Care program was launched in 2012 with the aim of improving the detection and management of depression and anxiety among older people receive aged care; and
- materials developed specifically for Registered Training Organisations so they can deliver content on depression and anxiety in older people as part of Certificate III and IV aged care courses.

Targeted information for older Australians and their families

The Department of Social Services funds the *My Aged Care* website, which provides an identifiable entry point to the aged care system, providing reliable information about aged care and healthy active ageing to older people, their families and carers. This includes information on types of mental health conditions along with a range of resources and support services that are available to assist individuals, families and carers, including linking to the *MindHealthConnect* website. *My Aged Care* also provides information directed to assisting carers in caring for someone with a mental health condition.

Beyondblue has been provided with funding to develop a wide range of targeted information for older Australians and their families, including fact sheets and booklets, which can be ordered free of charge from the *beyondblue* website. Additionally, in late 2011 *beyondblue* commenced a dedicated multimedia campaign aimed at raising awareness of depression and anxiety among older people and to encourage them to seek help. The campaign was evaluated in late 2012 and a follow-up campaign is now underway, drawing on the outcomes of the evaluation.