

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2011-2012, 30/31 May 2011

Question: E11-281

OUTCOME 11: Mental Health

Topic: MENTAL HEALTH WORKFORCE

Written Question on Notice

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

Is DOHA aware of difficulty being encountered in attracting and retaining mental health workforce, due to the attrition of Better Access and private practice and the continual uncertainty over funding for the providers?

Answer:

The Better Access initiative subsidises a range of mental health services provided by private practitioners including psychologists, social workers and occupational therapists. The strong growth in the program since it was introduced in November 2006 would indicate that there has been a continual increase in services provided by private practitioners as well as strong uptake by consumers.

If the question relates to perceived concerns that Better Access has contributed to a shift in the mental health workforce from the public sector to the private sector, analysis of the available data does not support this concern. According to the component of the Better Access evaluation designed to consider workforce issues, *An analysis of allied mental health workforce supply and distribution*, there was no evidence to suggest that Better Access has reduced the size of the public sector mental health workforce. The numbers of full time equivalent psychologists, social workers and occupational therapists providing care in public sector mental health services have risen steadily since 1995-96. The introduction of Better Access has had no apparent impact on this rate of increase.