



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

MEDIA RELEASE

Senate Community Affairs References Committee

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## Report published: Accessibility and quality of mental health services in rural and remote Australia

Issue date: 5 December 2018

The Senate's Community Affairs References Committee has called for a national strategy on rural and remote mental health to address the low rates of access to mental health services and the tragically high rate of suicide in Australia's rural and remote communities.

The committee's report, tabled in the Senate and published yesterday, sets out the findings of the inquiry into the accessibility and quality of mental health services in rural and remote Australia and makes 18 recommendations to Government.

"Australians living in rural and remote communities are less likely to seek mental health treatment than their city dwelling counterparts. Tragically they're also twice as likely to die by suicide" said Committee Chair, Senator Rachel Siewert.

"What has been lacking to date is a mental health strategy specifically for rural and remote communities which takes into account the unique service environments and myriad of barriers to accessing quality mental health services in rural and remote Australia."

"One clear message came from rural and remote communities: their voices and experiences are not being listened to in service design and delivery. The committee has made several recommendations to put the needs of the community first and improve the accessibility and quality of mental health services in rural and remote communities."

"For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultural competency is as important as clinical competency. It is essential that the mental health workforce receive training and input from their local community to ensure their services are culturally appropriate" said Senator Siewert.

The committee received 138 submissions and held 16 public hearings, travelling across Australia to hear from people that live and work in rural and remote communities.

A full copy of the committee's report can be found on the committee's website at [www.aph.gov.au/senate\\_ca](http://www.aph.gov.au/senate_ca)

**Media enquiries:** Office of Senator Rachel Siewert, Committee Chair on (02) 6277 3587

**For background information:** contact the committee secretariat on (02) 6277 3515 or [community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au)

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**DATE REFERRED**

19 March 2018

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**SUBMISSIONS CLOSED**

11 May 2018

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**REPORTING DATE**

4 December 2018

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**COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

Senator Rachel Siewert

(Chair)

Senator Lucy Gichuhi

(Deputy Chair)

Senator the Hon

Kristina Keneally

Senator Steve Martin

Senator Deborah O'Neill

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## **Inquiry terms of reference**

The accessibility and quality of mental health services in rural and remote Australia, with specific reference to:

- (a) the nature and underlying causes of rural and remote Australians accessing mental health services at a much lower rate;
- (b) the higher rate of suicide in rural and remote Australia;
- (c) the nature of the mental health workforce;
- (d) the challenges of delivering mental health services in the regions;
- (e) attitudes towards mental health services;
- (f) opportunities that technology presents for improved service delivery; and
- (g) any other related matters.

## **Where to get help**

The committee recognises that this inquiry considered matters which could be distressing for some persons. Persons interested in the inquiry who are seeking support or information about mental health services are able to contact a number of organisations including:

- [Lifeline](#) on 13 11 14
- [Kids Helpline](#) on 1800 551 800
- [MensLine Australia](#) on 1300 789 978
- [Suicide Call Back Service](#) on 1300 659 467
- [BeyondBlue](#) on 1300 22 46 36
- [Headspace](#) on 1800 650 890
- [Open Arms](#) (formerly Veterans & Veterans Families Counselling Service) on 1800 011 046
- Emergency services on 000 (triple zero) if you are in immediate danger