

List of Recommendations

Recommendation 1

4.10 The committee recommends that the Government ensure that 1800 RESPECT first response triage counsellors and trauma counsellors have adequate qualifications and experience and an appropriate work environment. Specifically that:

- **The 1800 RESPECT first response triage service is staffed only by counsellors with a minimum three year tertiary degree in counselling or equivalent and a demonstrated minimum three years' experience in specialised counselling in family domestic violence and sexual assault counselling and working with clients from diverse backgrounds and locations.**
- **The committee recommends that the government review the working arrangements for first response counsellors employed by Medibank Health Solutions, and intervene to ensure that:**
 - **first responders receive appropriate initial and ongoing training;**
 - **appropriate clinical supervision is provided;**
 - **the practice of working from home cease; and**
 - **policies and procedures aimed at protecting clients, and also those aimed at protecting responders from vicarious trauma, are implemented.**
- **More broadly, the committee recommends that the government consider whether having a principal contractor, rather than the specialist services themselves, providing first responder services represents value for money and best-practice.**

Recommendation 2

4.11 In respect of the trauma specialist counsellors, the committee recommends:

- **that sufficient funding be made available for the telephone counselling function of the 1800 RESPECT to ensure that there are sufficient specialist trauma counsellors to meet current and future demand for counselling, having regard to both quantitative and qualitative performance measures.**

Recommendation 3

4.18 The committee notes that many of the procurement and accountability issues revealed in this inquiry are the remit of the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) and strongly recommends that the government management of the program and its procedures is reviewed by the ANAO.

Recommendation 4

4.19 The committee recommends that the Department of Social Services develop an evaluation schedule for the 1800 RESPECT program and release a high level evaluation plan that includes the quantitative and qualitative performance measures the contractors and sub-contractors will be measured against.

Recommendation 5

4.20 The committee recommends the Department of Social Services brief its staff and contractors on their legal and contractual requirements in program management and Senate Standing Orders.

Recommendation 6

4.21 The committee further recommends that the government consider whether the principal contractor model, as currently arranged, represents value for money and best-practice. Specifically, the committee recommends that the government consider whether the value of the contract management services provided by Medibank Health Solutions (MHS) justifies the public funding provided to MHS for that purpose, or whether that is a function that would be better provided by government, with MHS retaining responsibility for the technological (telephony and online) aspects of the program.

Recommendation 7

4.26 The committee recommends that the Department of Social Services require Medibank Health Solutions to develop 1800 RESPECT specific privacy information that clearly explains how personal information will be recorded and maintained. The privacy information will detail what the individual's options are, including opting out of recordings and remaining anonymous.

Recommendation 8

4.27 The committee recommends that the Department of Social Services (DSS) require Medibank Health Solutions (MHS) to develop a clear statement for the 1800 Respect website detailing:

- how MHS manages information, voice records and files; and
- relevant information on the extent and limitations of privacy and confidentiality in a manner that they potential callers can fully understand.
- that the DSS develop a clear, written protocol on handling of subpoenas and applying for privilege for MHS and subcontractors by March 2018.
- that staff are informed of these protocols and their requirements.
- that this protocol is made available on the 1800 RESPECT website.