

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates 2017 - 2018

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Outcome/Program: Outcome 1: Prime Minister and Cabinet
Topic: 1800-RESPECT

Senator: Waters

Question reference number: 10

Type of question: FPA Monday 22 May 2017, page 75

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 7 July 2017

Number of pages: 2

Question:

Senator WATERS: Yes, but the solution is to give them some more funding so they can do the job. You do not need to contract it out to a private provider.

Senator Cash: And—I have not got it with me and I am trying to get it for you now—we have provided additional funding, in particular in relation to the second action plan under the national plan. Specific additional funding was provided for 1800RESPECT.

Senator WATERS: To MHS, though, or to—

Senator Cash: We are trying to get that for you now.

Senator WATERS: The extra funding was provided to whom?

Senator Cash: 1800RESPECT.

Senator WATERS: Who then gave it to MHS?

Senator Cash: I will need to find that out. That is what I am trying to get for you now.

Answer:

Medibank Health Solutions (MHS) has been contracted to deliver 1800RESPECT since the inception of the service in 2010. MHS subcontracted Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia (R&DVSA) to provide the trauma specialist-counselling component of the service.

In May 2015, the Commonwealth Government provided \$4 million to MHS in additional funding over two years to increase the capacity of 1800RESPECT in responding to increased call demand. R&DVSA was provided with \$3.6 million of this \$4 million funding (through MHS) over two years to 30 June 2017, with the remaining funding used by MHS to further improve the 1800RESPECT infrastructure.

This funding saw staffing levels at R&DVSA increase from 21 to 31.65 Full Time Equivalent staff members. Even after this funding increase, approximately 67% of calls were still unanswered and call wait times remained in excess of 10 minutes. As such, it became apparent that simply increasing funding was not going to enable the service to effectively respond to rising demand.

On 24 September 2015, the Commonwealth Government, under the Women's Safety Package, announced an additional \$5 million in funding to 1800RESPECT to expand and enhance the service to ensure more women are supported.