

Question on notice no. 283

Portfolio question number: AE21-283

2020-21 Additional estimates

Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee, Home Affairs Portfolio

Senator Stirling Griff: asked the Australian Border Force on 22 March 2021—

The Department of Home Affairs advised (through a Question on Notice) that, in response to Recommendation 8 of the Australian Human Rights Commission's report "Inspections of Australia's immigration detention facilities 2019", that: "the Department engaged a service provider to conduct a review of mental health services in held immigration detention. The Department is considering the outcomes of this review". Further, the Government's response to the Human Rights Commission report stated it had commissioned a "holistic review of mental health services to detainees in the immigration detention network" in early 2020.

Can you please provide details of the review:

- a. Who was engaged to conduct the review of mental health services? Was this put to open tender – if not, why not?
- b. What was the value and duration of the contract?
- c. What was the scope of the review? What was the provider specifically asked to assess and specifically asked not to include?
- d. Over what dates was the review conducted and which particular facilities were visited (please name each) ?
- e. Did that review involve interviews with detainees and/or their treating physician?
- f. How was the quality and effectiveness of mental health services in held detention assessed? Please outline the activities undertaken and the criteria used to make the assessment.
- g. Has the department completed consideration of this review?
- h. Please advise the next steps underway, or intended in response to the review.
- i. Can the department please provide a copy of the report. If not, please specify the PII grounds on which this request is being refused.

Answer —

Please see the attached answer.

**SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES
22 MARCH 2021**

**Home Affairs Portfolio
Department of Home Affairs**

Program 1.3: Onshore Compliance and Detention

AE21-283 - Mental health services in immigration detention facilities

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Answer:

- a. The Department engaged Blugibbon, via the Clinical Advice and Support Services panel arrangement. The panel was established following an open approach to market.
- b. The Contract term for Blugibbon was 7 May 2020 to 12 July 2020 at the value of \$56,958.64 including GST.
- c. The review was commissioned in order to consider the mental health care model for the current cohort in accordance with the Immigration Detention Health Services contract, including staffing, the clinical services, programs, management plans and any scope for improvements. The review was limited to persons located in onshore immigration detention facilities (IDFs) and did not include current Psychological Support Programs or health services for persons in community detention.

- d. The review was conducted during the period 7 May 2020 to 12 July 2020 and the report was provided to the Department on 15 July 2020. During the review, no facilities were visited due to COVID-19, and instead interviews were conducted through the use of videoconferencing.
- e. Following an open call for interviews, two (2) detainees located at Yongah Hill Immigration Detention Centre volunteered for interview, of whom had experience of mental health services in detention. Interviews were held with IHMS' frontline staff that included a Psychiatrist, Medical Director, Mental Health, Mental Health Services Management, Mental Health Nurse, General Adult Psychiatrist and Mental Health Counsellor.
- f. The review was conducted by a grounded theory approach. The grounded theory approach involved interviews with multiple stakeholders in order to assess how mental health services were being deployed within Immigration Detention Facilities. Consultations occurred with the Facilities and Detainee Services Provider, International Health and Medical Services personnel including frontline clinicians, Australian Border Force representatives from both National Office and Immigration Detention Facilities, Detainees, the office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman and an Internationally recognised expert on forensic behaviour management.
- g. The Department has considered the recommendations contained within the review.
- h. The Department has commenced drafting a Management Action Plan to address the recommendations contained within the review, including items that can be addressed in the short term (6-12 months), through negotiations with existing service providers and those that will be implemented long term, through future contract arrangements.
- i. The Department is not in a position to release a copy of the report by Blugibbon as this will be used to inform a planned major procurement activity and could advantage some tenderers during this process, compromising probity. Thus the Department is making a public interest immunity (PII) claim on the mental health care model report.