

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2011-2012, 15 February 2012

Question: E12-009

OUTCOME 11: Mental Health

Topic: COAG NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FUNDING

Written Question on Notice

Senator Wright asked:

\$5.5 billion was committed to the COAG National Action Plan (NP) on Mental Health 2006-2011, and these funds were allocated across four agreed action areas. Two-thirds of all NAP funding was allocated to Action Area 2: Integrating and Improving the Care System.

- a) Can you detail how these funds have been used to ensure better integration of services?
- b) How has Better Access helped improved the integration of services?

Answer:

- a) The Department of Health and Ageing has progressed six initiatives under Action Area 2: Integrating and Improving the Care System. One of these initiatives is Better Access which is addressed in b) below.

The initiatives were developed to support two policy directions:

- resourcing adequately health and community support services to meet the level of need; and
- developing ways of coordinating and integrating the range of care that is provided across the continuum of primary, acute and community services by public, non-government and private sector providers.

Progress on those initiatives that support the above policy directions is provided in the Commonwealth COAG progress report: April 2011, available at www.mentalhealth.gov.au

Note that States and Territories have also progressed initiatives under this action area. Details are available from the COAG National Action Plan for Mental Health 2006-2011 – Third Progress Report 2008-2009 available online at www.coag.gov.au.

- b) According to the Better Access evaluation, the initiative has increased community access to mental health care and it has encouraged collaboration between GPs and allied mental

health providers for the benefit of Australians with common mental disorders such as depression and anxiety. This supports the policy directions under Action Area 2: Integrating and improving the care system of the COAG National Action Plan on Mental Health 2006-2011.

The evaluation found that 55.1 per cent of all Better Access users received interdisciplinary care i.e. services from more than one type of provider. This may include services provided by a GP plus an allied health provider, or psychiatrist; or services provided by an allied health provider and psychiatrist but no GP.