

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2016 - 2017, 1 March 2017

Ref No: SQ17-000467

OUTCOME: 2 - Health Access and Support Services

Topic: PHNs

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: O'Neill, Deborah

Question:

Engaging PHNs

There are issues raised by some stakeholders that the process of working with the PHNs can be confusing, there is a cost to the service provider in relation to engaging with the PHN and there are also issues around the level of mental health expertise within some PHNs. Is the Department and Minister confident each of the PHNs has the necessary expertise to commission mental health services and programs? If not, what is the Minister or Department doing to ensure there is a high level of mental health expertise across the PHNs?

Some service providers in rural and regional areas have to engage between 8 and 13 PHNs. That means they have to submit between 8 and 13 applications to each of the PHNs. This, for the service provider, means dedicating a lot of cost and time to this process. Does the Department think this is an efficient way for service providers to be dealing with PHNs?

Answer:

The Department of Health provides guidance material to Primary Health Networks (PHNs) on commissioning mental health services. This information is publicly available at http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/phn-mental_tools

The guidance material provides clarity on core issues, sets out expectations of PHNs and provides best practice examples, where appropriate. Guidance topics are at Attachment A.

It is expected that, in the PHNs' commissioning role, relevant national standards (such as the National Practice Standards for the Mental Health Workforce 2013 and the National Framework for Recovery Oriented Mental Health Services 2013), regulations and guidelines would be applied to promote service quality and effectiveness.

The key national standards in place to support quality of care in mental health service delivery and workforce standards are the National Standards for Mental Health Services (2010). The Standards aim to assist all mental health services to provide quality care that is evidenced based, integrated, and recovery-focused. The Standards provide a blueprint for new and existing services to guide quality improvement and service enhancement activities. Individual Guidelines for implementation of the Standards are available for public mental

health services and private hospitals; non-government community services; and private office based mental health practices.

On 28 March 2017, the Minister for Health announced the establishment of the Primary Health Network Advisory Panel on Mental Health. It will be an independent non-statutory committee established by the Minister for Health to provide advice to support the Government's plans to improve the delivery of frontline mental health services through PHNs.

As the PHN program develops, opportunities for cooperative relationships between PHNs are emerging. For example, in Queensland, five PHNs are commissioning Integrated Team Care services for their regions, in a single contract, through one PHN to reduce administrative costs and burden.

In NSW, two neighbouring PHNs are currently working towards jointly commissioning a service provider to establish and operate a residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation program specifically for Indigenous women and their children across their region.

PHN Primary Mental Health Care Flexible Funding Pool Implementation Guidance

Available at:

http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/phn-mental_tools

1. Stepped Care
2. Low Intensity Mental Health Services for Early Intervention
3. Psychological Therapies Provided by Mental Health Professionals to Underserved Groups
4. Primary Mental Health Care Services for People with Severe Mental Illness
5. Regional Approach to Suicide Prevention
6. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health Services
7. Child and Youth Mental Health Services
8. Consumer and Carer Engagement and Participation
9. Workforce support information and resources