

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2012-2013, 30 & 31 May and 1 June 2012

Question: E12-161

OUTCOME 11: Mental Health

Topic: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Strategy

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Number of pages: 2

Senator: Senator Scullion

Question:

This is not just in regard to mental health. You may be aware that-I understand there is a case to be argued that-there are many Indigenous males being held in jails in both Western Australia and the Northern Territory who have not actually been convicted of a crime. They are being held there effectively because of what has been alleged about their mental health. Someone is challenging, I understand-I do not have any more details than that-whether or not that is constitutional. I know that that case has not got anything to do with the Commonwealth; it is specifically to do with Western Australia and the Northern Territory. And I know we do not like to deal with hypotheticals. But I just wondered if you had considered the capacity to deal with these individuals, either in terms of accommodation or further support outside of the correctional system in both Western Australia and the Northern Territory should this High Court challenge be successful. Have you been following those processes? Is the government considering where they may need to provide support to the Territory and Western Australia in that regard? -Because it has only been reported today or very recently-perhaps you can just look at that on notice. If you have anything further to provide, you can do it then?

Answer:

While the issues identified are primarily the responsibility of state and territory governments, the Australian Government is working with jurisdictions to address the broader issues that lead to the circumstances outlined above through the 2011-12 Budget Delivering National Mental Health Reform package. As part of this package, the National Partnership Agreement Supporting National Mental Health Reform provides funding to encourage states and territories to invest more in the mental health priority areas of accommodation and emergency departments to support those with severe mental illness. This will help move Australia's mental health system away from crisis-driven activity towards prevention, early intervention and care in the community.

It will particularly benefit people with severe and persistent mental illness who are frequent users of emergency departments and who need stable accommodation to keep well and break the cycle of hospitalisation and homelessness.

Both Western Australia and the Northern Territory will receive funding for accommodation projects under the National Partnership. In Western Australia, the Individualised Community Living Initiative provides support packages for people with severe and persistent mental illness and complex needs and aims to enable people with mental illness to live in the community and sustain successful, permanent and stable tenancies. In the Northern Territory, the Accommodation Support for people in Darwin with severe and persistent mental illness Initiative provides access to stable accommodation and access to individualised support to promote recovery.

Within the Delivering National Mental Health Reform package, there are two programs currently under development which will assist in keeping people with, or at risk of, severe mental illness well and in the community. Partners in Recovery will target people with severe and persistent mental illness with complex needs and aims to ensure coordinated and integrated services and supports. Early Psychosis Prevention and Intervention Centres will improve outcomes for people aged 15-24 years with a first episode of psychosis by providing early intervention, support mechanisms and treatment.