

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: E12-016

OUTCOME 0: Whole of Portfolio

Topic: Diabetes and Mental Illness

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Number of pages: 2

Senator: Senator Boyce

Question:

- a) Is the department aware of the strong link between diabetes and mental illness and do you believe there is general awareness in the community of this link?
- b) how is the department raising awareness of the link between diabetes and mental illness?

Answer:

- a) The department understands that diabetes can impact adversely on the mental wellbeing of persons affected by the disease, and that individuals with newly diagnosed conditions can be particularly at risk of poor mental health as they make the psychological adjustment to their changed circumstances. People with a mental illness can also be more susceptible to contracting type 2 diabetes due to heightened stress impacting adversely on blood sugar levels, or through the unintended side effects that can result from taking anti-psychotic drugs.

The level of public awareness of these linkages is unclear, but it is noted that peak bodies such as Diabetes Australia and the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation highlight the association between diabetes and adverse mental wellbeing in education and communications material relating to the disease.

As part of the government funded National Diabetes Services Scheme (managed by Diabetes Australia), National Development Programs (NDPs) have been established to explore opportunities and fund activities to support information, resources and/or services to address areas of identified need.

Government funding for researching the relationship between diabetes and mental illness has been provided through National Health and Medical Research Council grants. In addition, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) has explored the links between mental illness and diabetes through its National Centre for Diabetes Monitoring. In 2011, the AIHW published a report on this subject titled – *Diabetes and poor mental health and wellbeing: an exploratory analysis*.