

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2017 - 2018, 29 May 2017

Ref No: SQ17-000683

OUTCOME: 2 - Health Access and Support Services

Topic: Kimberley Suicide Statistics

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Sterle, Glenn

Question:

- a) Does the Department agree that thereabouts ten per cent of the nation's Aboriginal suicides are in the Kimberley alone?
- b) What does the Department say about the startling statistics claimed of the Kimberley by Gerry Georgatos of the level of poverty and homelessness among Aboriginal peoples?
- c) Can you provide detail as to what you are doing to address this?

Answer:

- a) Yes.
- b) The Department of Health acknowledges the impact of suicide in the Kimberley region.
- c) Through the Health portfolio the Australian Government is investing in a number of areas to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and suicide prevention. This includes \$84.75 million over three years to improve access to culturally sensitive mental health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, under the Indigenous Mental Health Programme.

From 2016-17, \$6.3 million per annum has also been committed over the forward estimates for national and regional Indigenous-specific suicide prevention activities. This includes an allocation of \$5.6 million per annum to Primary Health Networks (PHNs) for the planning and commissioning of regionally and culturally appropriate mental health and suicide prevention services.

The Country WA PHN receives funding for mental health and suicide prevention services under these funding arrangements. Investment by the Country WA PHN to support Indigenous suicide prevention and mental health in the Kimberley region is detailed in Question on Notice SQ17-000605.

The Kimberley region has been selected as a site for a suicide prevention trial in recognition of the high rate of suicide in the region, particularly in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. By announcing the Kimberley region as a suicide prevention trial site, the Government has committed \$3 million over three years to strengthen those

existing services that are working well and to look at new approaches in suicide prevention. This commitment is part of a \$34 million investment over three years for 12 national suicide prevention trials in regional areas of Australia.

The University of Western Australia has recently been selected to establish the National Centre of Best Practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention, and will receive funding of \$1.75 million commencing in April 2017 and ceasing June 2019. This Indigenous led project will help build the capacity of PHNs, Indigenous organisations and communities in the development of suicide prevention activity tailored to regional needs.

In addition to the programs and services above, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can access mental health services and pharmaceutical products through the Medical Benefits Scheme and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, and services through Aboriginal community controlled organisations funded throughout Australia.