

**Senate Community Affairs Committee**

**ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**HEALTH PORTFOLIO**

**Budget Estimates 2017 - 2018, 30 May 2017**

**Ref No:** SQ17-000893

**OUTCOME:** 2 - Health Access and Support Services

**Topic:** Primary Health Networks

**Type of Question:** Written Question on Notice

**Senator:** O'Neill, Deborah

**Question:**

Given the PHNs are required to apply a regionally based approach to planning and commissioning services – which was the Government's core reason for establishing the PHNs – how will a centralised & national panel ensure this regional focus is not lost and also have the expertise to provide advice on each 31 PHNs regions issues? PHNs are required to commission services which providers and organisations in the sector are required to tender for. Will there be any members of the Panel who could also potentially be tendering for services or have a connection to a service or organisation tendering for services, and if so, does this create issues around conflict of interest?

**Answer:**

The terms of reference for the Primary Health Network Advisory Panel on Mental Health (the Advisory Panel) have a strong focus on establishing frameworks and supports for PHNs that will enable them to effectively undertake and implement the local consultation, local design and local solutions which contribute to their mental health commissioning role.

The Advisory Panel membership includes broad representation from across the sector, including mental health professionals, individuals working within peak-bodies, carers, consumers and members of the National Mental Health Commission's Advisory Board. It is possible that some of these members could have real or perceived conflicts of interest. The Co-Chairs of the Advisory Panel have acknowledged that open, transparent management of conflicts of interest, both real and perceived, is important, and a process was undertaken to ensure the interests were fully declared and appropriate management strategies were in place prior to the Panel's first meeting.