

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2010-11, 20 October 2010

Question: E10-097

OUTCOME 11: Mental Health

Topic: BETTER ACCESS

Written Question on Notice:

Senator Boyce asked:

- a) Is the Department aware of the 'wrap around' services provided for free by social workers under the Better Access program?
- b) If the Department is not aware, why not?

Answer:

a and b)

The Department is aware of the 'wrap around' services provided by social workers and this issue was further discussed at a consultative forum on 24 June 2010 hosted by the Department and attended by representatives of the Australian Association of Social Workers and Occupational Therapy Australia.

Social workers state that the optimal care for more complex clients requires services in addition to focused psychological strategies funded under the Better Access initiative. These can include, for example, referrals to housing services and alcohol and other drug treatment services.

Focused psychological strategies services provided under the Better Access initiative are designed to address the specific diagnosed mental disorder concerns of clients who are referred to mental health social workers by their general practitioner, psychiatrist or paediatrician.

The Government recognises that fee for service arrangements do not necessarily suit those with more complex care needs and is working with all allied health providers to design new flexible care packages. Under the 2010-11 Budget measure Flexible Care Packages for People with Severe Mental Illness, individuals who are referred to Access to Allied Psychological Services (ATAPS) by a GP or psychiatrist will be able to access a package of care which is tailored to their personal needs. They will also be able to access a case manager who will work closely with the GP or psychiatrist and will help individuals navigate the clinical and social support they need.

The Minister for Health and Ageing, the Hon Nicola Roxon MP, and the Minister for Mental Health and Ageing, the Hon Mark Butler MP, announced on 12 November 2010 that social workers and occupational therapists will continue to be able to provide Medicare-funded services under the Better Access initiative.