

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2010-11, 20 October 2010

Question: E10-344

OUTCOME 11: Mental Health

Topic: YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH - EPPICS

Written Question on Notice

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

During the election campaign, the Prime Minister stated “in particular, the Government recognises that better youth mental health services is an area where further investment is needed - and that our existing network of services will need to be scaled up over time.” (‘Moving forward to a better health system,’ Brisbane, 27th July 2010).

- a) Does the Government anticipate significantly increasing its levels of investment in headspace for young Australians with mild to moderate mental ill health and Early Psychosis Prevention and Intervention Centres (EPPICs) for young Australians with serious mental illness?
- b) Does the Government have a target for when all Australian communities can provide their young people with access to the kind of evidence based youth mental health care represented by headspace and EPPIC?

Answer:

- a) On 27 July 2010, the Prime Minister, the Hon Julia Gillard MP, stated mental health will be an important second term agenda for the Labor Government, announcing the “*Taking Action to Tackle Suicide*” strategy. Under this strategy, \$274 million will be invested over four years to:
 1. Provide more services to those at greatest risk of suicide including psychology and psychiatry services, as well as non-clinical support to assist people with severe mental illness and their carers with their day-to-day needs.
 2. Invest more in direct suicide prevention and crisis intervention, including through boosting the capacity of counselling services such as Lifeline and providing funding to improve safety at suicide ‘hotspots’.
 3. Provide more services and support to men – who are at greatest risk of suicide, but least likely to seek help.
 4. Promote good mental health and resilience in young people, to prevent suicide later in life.

These important new measures build on existing reforms already underway. On 20 April 2010, the Australian Government and state and territory governments, with the exception of Western Australia, reached an historic agreement at Council of Australian Governments (COAG), on health and hospitals reform. The establishment of the National Health and Hospitals Network (NHHN) represents the most significant reform to Australia’s health and hospitals system since the introduction of Medicare.

Under the NHHN Agreement, the Australian Government will take full funding and policy responsibility for primary mental health care services for common disorders such as anxiety and depression of mild to moderate severity, including those currently provided by states and territories.

The Australian Government has also signalled its determination to improve services for people with severe mental illness. As part of the 2010-11 Budget, \$175.8 million was allocated to improve our mental health system as part of the NHHN. This includes:

- \$78.8 million over four years to deliver up to 30 new headspace youth friendly services, provision of extra funding for the existing 30 headspace sites, and improvements to telephone and web-based support services for young people. The locations of the first ten new headspace centres were announced on 24 July 2010 by Minister Roxon. These new services will be established by headspace this year;
- \$25.5 million over four years to expand the Early Psychosis Prevention and Intervention Centre (EPPIC) model in partnership with interested states and territories;
- \$13 million over two years under the Mental Health Nurse Incentive Program; and
- \$58.5 million over four years will be directed to deliver flexible care packages to better support up to 25,000 people with severe mental illness, to be delivered through Access to Allied Psychological Services arrangements.

In addition, \$5.5 million has been allocated to extend the existing Mental Health Support for Drought Affected Communities initiative to June 2011.

Services for people with severe mental illness will also be improved by the Government's \$1.6 billion investment to expand sub-acute care facilities. Extra community-based residential mental health beds will ease transitions from hospital to the community and reduce the need for hospitalisation.

The expansion of headspace through the 2010 Budget measure *More Youth Friendly Mental Health Services* will build on the current investment of \$50.6 million to headspace. It should be noted that while headspace specifically targets youth, young people can and do access a range of other Australian Government funded mental health services, including Access to Allied Psychological Services (ATAPS) and the Better Access to Psychiatrists, Psychologists and GPs through the Medicare Benefits Schedule (Better Access) initiative.

The Australian Government also funds a range of telephone and web-based supports that are well utilised by young people, including Kids Helpline, the Inspire Foundation and MoodGym. The 2010 Budget measure *More Youth Friendly Mental Health Services* includes funding of \$12.3 million for the development of a telephone and web-based service that aims to improve access for young people aged 12-25 years to experienced mental health counsellors.

Child and youth targeted funding is also a core part of the 2010 Election Commitment, *Taking Action to Tackle Suicide*. \$61.3 million over four years, commencing 1 January 2011, will be allocated under the *Promoting good mental health and resilience in young people* component to provide more services for children with mental health problems as well as promoting resilience and good mental health in young people. Funding will be provided to:

- Expand the *KidsMatter* Primary School Program to provide services to students at an additional 1,700 schools;

- Develop linkages and support network between primary health care services and local mental health providers. This will support up to 26,000 children with serious mental health, development and behavioural issues; and
 - Expand online mental health and counseling services of up to an additional 40,000 young people to supplement face-to-face mental health services.
- b) In April 2010 COAG agreed, with the exception of Western Australia, that the Australian Government will have full funding and policy responsibility for GP and primary health care, including primary mental health care. COAG agreed that the Commonwealth will take responsibility for primary mental health care services for common mild to moderate disorders such as anxiety and depression, including those currently provided by the states.

In addition COAG agreed, with the exception of Western Australia, to undertake further work on the scope for additional mental health service reform for report back in 2011, including the potential for further improvements to the allocation of roles and responsibilities in the mental health sector. The Commonwealth identified its intention to provide greater policy and funding leadership for specialist community mental health services over time.

Any future investment decisions will be a matter for Government in the context of the report back to COAG on mental health reform