

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2011-2012, 19 October 2011

Question: E11-123

OUTCOME 11: Mental Health

Topic: SIBLINGS OF CHILDREN AND ADULTS WITH DISABILITY AND CHRONIC ILLNESS

Written Question on Notice

Senator Wright asked:

Several reports and position papers have highlighted the needs of siblings in relation to mental health including AIFS (Edwards et al, 2008) The Nature and Impact of Caring for Family Members with a Disability in Australia, in which siblings were identified as having higher rates of depression, regardless of whether they played a caring role or not. Previous governments have supported siblings of children and adults with disability and chronic illness.

What is DoHA doing to support siblings of children and adults with disabilities and chronic illness?

Answer:

With an estimated one in five Australians experiencing a mental health problem in any one year, mental illness is a whole of family issue. As a result the Australian Government, through various programs, has sought to embed awareness and support of broader family needs into the service system.

Many Commonwealth mental health programs take a broad view in considering the needs of people with mental health problems. For example, the needs of siblings of children and adults with disabilities and chronic illness are recognised through a number of child and youth mental health initiatives funded by the Department of Health and Ageing, including:

- KidsMatter, a mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention initiative for children in primary schools and early childhood services. KidsMatter aims to improve the mental health and wellbeing of primary school students, including siblings of people with a disability or a chronic disease. More information is available at www.kidsmatter.edu.au;
- MindMatters, a mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention initiative for secondary school students. The initiative aims to help young people develop the social and emotional skills required to meet life's challenges. More information is available at www.mindmatters.edu.au; and

- Children Of Parents with a Mental Illness (COPMI) initiative, which aims to promote better mental health outcomes for children of parents with a mental health problem through, for example, information for family members and carers (including children) and skills training for primary mental health workers. More information is available at www.copmi.net.au

In addition, the national youth mental health service headspace works with young people affected by mental illness and their families. headspace is being significantly expanded in the 2011 Budget, meaning there will be 90 headspace sites around Australia by 2014-15. Face to face headspace services are now complemented by the recently launched eheadspace, which provides free, confidential and anonymous online and telephone counselling services to young people between the ages of 12 and 25 years with, or at risk of developing, mental illness.