

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2011-2012, 19 October 2011

Question: E11-213

OUTCOME 11: Mental Health

Topic: EVALUATION OF THE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN RURAL AND REMOTE AREAS PROGRAM

Written Question on Notice

Senator Adams asked:

Concerning the PricewaterhouseCoopers contract to evaluate the Mental Health Services in Rural and Remote Areas Program (4/02/2010 31/03/2011 Open \$178,581.90).

- a) Please describe and scope the evaluation? (e.g. size, participants – number and how they were selected, methodology etc)
- b) What were the main findings of this evaluation?
- c) How will the findings be used?
- d) Will it be publicly released?

Answer:

- a) The scope of the Mental Health Services in Rural and Remote Areas (MHSRRA) Program Evaluation was to assess the overall appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency of the MHSRRA Program, specifically addressing the following evaluation questions:
 - To what extent has the MHSRRA Program achieved its objectives?
 - To what extent has the MHSRRA Program been an effective response to the access gaps and need for primary mental health care for people with high prevalence mental health disorders living in rural and remote areas of Australia?
- b) – d) The evaluation has shown that the MHSRRA Program has made a considerable difference to mental health in rural and remote Australia, not just in relation to increasing access, but also in relation to increasing workforce and reducing the stigma associated with mental health.

The qualitative evaluation results indicate that the Program is perceived by professionals, communities, recipients and their families as providing an appropriate and effective response in those areas with low access to mental health care. The Final Evaluation Report indicates that the flexibility and interdisciplinary nature of the Program has enabled innovative service models to be supported.

It also identifies that workforce attraction and retention remain a significant issue in rural and remote regions.

The findings of the evaluation were used to inform the decision of the Minister for Mental Health and Ageing, the Honourable Mark Butler to extend funding for the Program to 30 June 2013, and will be used to inform future parameters of the Program.

The Final Evaluation Report (January 2011) was made publicly available in May 2011 on the www.mentalhealth.gov.au website.