

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2016 - 2017, 19 October 2016

Ref No: SQ16-000523

OUTCOME: 2 - Health Access and Support Services

Topic: Mental Health Services

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Siewert, Rachel

Question:

Is the Government aware of any PHNs where there are significant problems with the implementation of any of the programs transitioning into the flexible pool?
a) If so, please provide details.

Answer:

Implementation of the mental health flexible funding pool represents a significant change in the way primary mental health care services are delivered.

The Department of Health is aware that the transition of mental health nursing services has been impacted in a few regions that are managing funding reductions due to a redistribution of funds to address inequities in the former program. Please refer to SQ16-000440 for details.

Primary Health Networks (PHNs) are required to ensure appropriate treatment services are available.

The Department is continuing to work closely with stakeholders, including the Australian College of Mental Health Nurses, the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, PHNs and mental health nurses to minimise these impacts.

As part of its response to the National Mental Health Commission's Review of Mental Health Programs and Services, the Government decided to transition from the current Early Psychosis Youth Services (EPYS) Program to new arrangements that support young people experiencing, or at risk of, severe mental illness. From 1 July 2016, tapered funding that reflected tailored arrangements for each of the six EPYS centres was directed to PHNs to transition the EPYS program for young people in each region.

During the election, the Australian Government made a commitment to continue funding for six EPYS centres. Until this election commitment has been formalised, PHNs have contractual arrangements in place with lead agencies to operate EPYS centres based on the transition funding available. These contractual arrangements will require further alteration once election commitments are formalised.