

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

Review of the Defence Annual Report 2015-16 –17 February 2017

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Defence

Topic: ADF Mental Health Expenditure

Question reference number: 16

Senator: O'Neill

Type of question: asked on Friday, 17 February 2017, Hansard page 58-59

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 14 March 2017

Question:

Senator O'NEILL: What is your provision for a health care expenditure? How much?

Air Vice Marshal Smart: Overall of health care: I do not have it exactly in front of me, but it is about \$450 million annually but, obviously, the health price index does increase every year so that is escalated in accordance with that.

Senator O'NEILL: What percentage of that is for mental health service provision?

Air Vice Marshal Smart: It is very hard to tease out the specific mental health things, but we can take the question on notice. Our mental health services could be someone coming into a GP, having an acute stress type problem, right through to going to see psychiatrist and everything in between. Often it is difficult to tease out what exactly what is mental health and what is not mental health, but we can attempt to do that in a little bit more detail for you.

Answer:

The total Joint Health Command expenditure for 2015-16 was \$443 million (excluding medical equipment, pharmaceuticals and consumables expenditure) and of this, \$43 million was mental health expenditure (approximately 10 per cent). To date since 2009, Defence has spent over \$218 million in the provision of mental health care and support. This includes the cost of services provided to current serving members and Reserve members on Continuous Full Time Service by the Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service and the All Hours Support described by Schedule 6 to the *Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Defence and the Department of Veterans' Affairs for the Cooperative Delivery of Care and Support to Eligible Persons*. This includes:

- The referral of Defence members by Defence health professionals to the Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Services for the provision of mental health services, independent of eligibility under the Veterans' Entitlement Act or Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act, on a fee for service basis; called the Agreement for Services.

- The Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service provision of the Defence All-Hours Support Line which is a 24/7 mental health triage call service available to current serving members and their families under a contract arrangement.

The contracted health services (external referrals through Medibank Health Solution) annual expenditure for the 2015-16 Financial Year for mental health items was \$21.5 million (GST excluded), which is 50 per cent of the \$43 million mental health expenditure. This includes consultations with psychologists and psychiatrists for a variety of disorders, intervention programs, case conferencing and report preparation.