



## PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

### Senate Community Affairs References Committee

# Accessibility and quality of mental health services in rural and remote Australia – call for submissions

The Senate Community Affairs References Committee is conducting an inquiry into the accessibility and quality of mental health services in rural and remote Australia.

"Australians struggling with mental ill-health already have the odds stacked against them finding access to mental health services," said Committee Chair, Senator Rachel Siewert.

"This is only exacerbated in the bush, with regional and remote Australians, particularly our first peoples and our farmers, struggling with high rates of mental ill health and suicide."

The committee will be examining a number of aspects relating to mental health services in rural and remote Australia, detailed in the terms of reference below.

The committee plans to hold public hearings at rural and remote locations around Australia. A program of hearings will be released after the close of submissions.

Further information about the inquiry, including published submissions and hearing programs, will be available on the committee website: [www.aph.gov.au/senate\\_ca](http://www.aph.gov.au/senate_ca).

### **Inquiry terms of reference**

The accessibility and quality of mental health services in rural and remote Australia, with specific reference to:

- (a) the nature and underlying causes of rural and remote Australians accessing mental health services at a much lower rate;
- (b) the higher rate of suicide in rural and remote Australia;
- (c) the nature of the mental health workforce;
- (d) the challenges of delivering mental health services in the regions;
- (e) attitudes towards mental health services;
- (f) opportunities that technology presents for improved service delivery; and
- (g) any other related matters.

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#### **DATE REFERRED**

19 March 2018

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#### **SUBMISSIONS CLOSE**

11 May 2018

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#### **REPORTING DATE**

17 October 2018

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#### **COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

Senator Rachel Siewert  
(Chair)

Senator Slade Brockman  
(Deputy Chair)

Senator Jonathon Duniam  
Senator the Hon  
Kristina Keneally

Senator Louise Pratt  
Senator Deborah O'Neill

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#### **CONTACT THE COMMITTEE**

Senate Standing Committee  
on Community Affairs

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## Making a submission

The committee is seeking submissions from a wide range of people – including service providers, health professionals and members of the public – about their views and experience of mental health services in rural and remote Australia.

While the committee has requested that submissions to the inquiry be received by **11 May 2018**, it will continue to consider and accept submissions after this date.

If you are interested in contributing to the committee's inquiry, you may find it helpful to look at the [guide for preparing a submission](#). It includes suggestions on what to include in a submission, a check list, and information about what happens to your submission once it has been received by the committee.

As a large number of submissions may be received for this inquiry, including many of a sensitive and personal nature, there may be a delay between a submission being received and it being considered and approved for publication by the committee. This process may take a number of weeks and the committee thanks submitters for their patience in this matter.

You can ask the committee to keep your submission confidential. Confidential submissions are only read by members of the committee and the secretariat and are not published online. Please include the word **confidential** clearly on the front of your submission to request this.

The committee emphasises that it is not in a position to provide advice on individual circumstances. The committee's focus is on the broad issues raised in the terms of reference of the inquiry with a focus on rural and remote Australia.

If you or anyone you know needs help you can contact one of the services below:

- [Lifeline](#) on 13 11 14
- [Kids Helpline](#) on 1800 551 800
- [MensLine Australia](#) on 1300 789 978
- [Suicide Call Back Service](#) on 1300 659 467
- [BeyondBlue](#) on 1300 22 46 36
- [Headspace](#) on 1800 650 890
- [Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service](#) on 1800 011 046
- Emergency services on 000 (triple zero) if you are in immediate danger.

If you have questions, or need more time to write your submission, please contact the secretariat.

## Attending a public hearing

The committee plans to hold a number of public hearings in rural and remote Australia during this inquiry. The date and location of these hearings will be published on the committee's website once confirmed.

Most committee hearings are held in public and anyone is welcome to come and listen. The audio and video of each hearing will also be broadcast live on the internet:

[www.aph.gov.au/News\\_and\\_Events/Watch\\_Parliament](http://www.aph.gov.au/News_and_Events/Watch_Parliament)

Further information about what to expect when attending a Senate committee hearings is available on the Senate website: [Attending a public hearing](#)