

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Select Committee on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

Inquiry into Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

18 March 2021

PDR Number: IQ21-000066

Evaluations currently underway or recently completed

Spoken

Hansard Page number: 8

Member: Fiona Martin

Question:

Mr Roddam: I'll mention some of the evaluations that are underway. We've just commenced an evaluation of the Medicare Benefits Schedule (Better Access) system. We're in the early stages of an evaluation of headspace, which will be the first one done since about 2015; obviously, given the significant expansion of the network during that time, that's particularly important. We recently completed an evaluation of the Early Psychosis Youth Services, run by Orygen, and we have a lot of strategies and frameworks underway which will help those evaluations as well, including our digital program. We have the National Mental Health Workforce Strategy underway and a range of others. Certainly on notice we could provide a list of those evaluations that are underway or recently completed, if that would help the committee.

CHAIR: That would be useful.

Answer:

Mental health evaluations that are underway or recently completed are outlined at **Attachment A**.

Mental health program evaluations currently underway or recently completed – as at 26 March 2021

#	Program / Activity	Brief Description	Evaluation Status	Evaluation Summary
1.	HeadtoHelp mental health clinics Victoria – COVID-19	The <i>HeadtoHelp</i> clinics are part of the Australian Government’s mental health package to further enhance the mental health support available to Victorians during the COVID-19 pandemic. The <i>HeadtoHelp</i> clinics opened on 14 September 2020 and are a free service that improve accessibility for Victorians who need mental health support and provide additional capacity within the mental health system through relieving pressure on existing mental health services.	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department of Health has commissioned Nous as the independent evaluator of the <i>HeadtoHelp</i> initiative in Victoria to evaluate impact and target any emerging mental health needs. The evaluation will also consider the establishment phase of the Adult Mental Health Centres trial.
2.	Adult Mental Health Centres (AMHC) trial	The Australian Government is investing in a trial of eight Adult Mental Health Centres, with one to be established in each state and territory. The design of the Centres is to provide a welcoming, low stigma, ‘no wrong door’ entry point for adults to access mental health information, services and supports through a multidisciplinary team operating over extended hours without needing a prior appointment or paying a fee. The Centres will trial service navigation approaches to help connect people to other services in the region which will meet their needs and provide immediate support for people experiencing significant distress or who are in crisis.	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department of Health has commissioned Nous as the independent evaluator of the AMHC trial establishment phase, in parallel with the evaluation of <i>HeadtoHelp</i> clinics.
3.	Digital Mental Health (National Digital Mental Health Framework)	In line with Action 32 of the <i>Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan</i> , the Government is leading development of a National Digital Mental Health Framework (the Framework) to guide investment in online and digital services which can support the mental health of Australians.	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PriceWaterhouseCooper has been engaged to develop the Framework, including a review of the current digital mental health service landscape and challenges and barriers being experienced. The project will contribute to implementation of future strategic directions in digital mental health.
4	National headspace program	The National headspace Program aims to improve access for young people aged 12 to 25 years who have, or are at risk of, mental illness. The network of headspace services provide holistic care in four key areas: mental health, related physical health, alcohol and other drug use and, social and vocational support.	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KPMG, in consortium with batyr and the Social Policy Research Centre of the University of NSW, has been engaged to deliver an independent evaluation of the National headspace network. The evaluation is considering the understanding and effectiveness of headspace; the relative cost-effectiveness and value of headspace; and factors affecting future implementation, sustainability and enhancement of headspace.
5.	National Support for Child and Youth Mental Health Program	The National Support for Child and Youth Mental Health Program aims to improve mental health outcomes for children and young people, commencing with the early years and going through to adolescence.	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University of Queensland (UQ), is undertaking an overarching evaluation of the National Support for Child and Youth Mental Health Program (the Program). The evaluation will analyse the extent to which the Mental Health in Education and the National Workforce Support in Child Mental Health initiatives contribute to achieving the aims and objectives of the Program, and assess the Program’s appropriateness, effectiveness, and cost effectiveness and identify opportunities to strengthen or improve the Program to meet its intended objectives.
6.	Early Psychosis Youth Service (EPYS) Program	The EPYS Program aims to reduce the incidence and severity of psychosis within the community through prevention, early detection and coordinated care delivery. EPYS provides integrated early intervention treatment and intensive support to young people aged 12 to 25 years who are at ultra-high risk of, or are experiencing, a first episode psychosis. The program is currently delivered through the headspace network in Western Sydney, South Eastern Queensland, North Perth, South Eastern Melbourne, Darwin and Adelaide.	Complete	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ernst & Young (EY), in consortium with the George Institute for Global Health and the University of Sydney, conducted an evaluation of the EPYS Program. The evaluation examined the appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency and equity of the program to determine its impact and inform future policy decisions.
7.	Psychosocial Support Programs	The Australian Government funds psychosocial support services that aim to assist people with severe mental illness, who are not accessing psychosocial support through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), to live independently at an optimal level in the community. An evaluation of the Commonwealth component of the National Psychosocial Support Measure and the Continuity of Support program has been undertaken. An evaluation of the Commonwealth component of the National Psychosocial Support Measure and the Continuity of Support program has been commissioned.	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nous Group has been engaged to conduct an evaluation of the National Psychosocial Support Measure (NPS-M) and Continuity of Support programs.
8.	Better Access to Psychiatrists, Psychologists and General Practitioners through the MBS initiative (Better Access)	Better Access aims to improve outcomes for people with a clinically-diagnosed mental disorders by increasing community access to team-based, multi-disciplinary mental health care.	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On November 30 2020, the Government announced it would undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the Better Access initiative in line with the recommendation in the Productivity Commission inquiry into mental health. The evaluation will consider: evidence-based treatment and interventions available under Better Access; eligible providers, levels of treatment and

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				special access arrangements; and qualitative and quantitative data to determine patient outcomes and provider experience.
9.	Improving Social Connectedness Pilot	The Improving Social Connectedness Pilot funds the Perth South and Nepean Blue Mountains PHNs, in partnership with Australia College of Mental Health Nurses to design, develop and deliver a two year pilot to improve social connectedness and reduce the risk of mental and physical health problems in older people over 75 years (and Indigenous Australians over 65 years).	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University of Wollongong is conducting an evaluation of the pilot. Key considerations include the pilot's appropriateness, outcomes, cost effectiveness and lessons learnt.
10.	Drought measure - Trusted Advocates initiative	The Drought measure provides additional informal mental health support and referral pathways to individuals affected by the drought.	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University of Wollongong has been engaged to conduct an evaluation of the Trusted Advocates initiative. The evaluation will enable a qualitative review of impact of volunteer, localised community-based support to people in drought affected communities.
11.	National Suicide Prevention Leadership and Support Program	The National Suicide Prevention Leadership and Support Program funds a total of 18 suicide prevention projects with the aim of reducing suicide and suicidal behaviour in the Australian population. Projects are funded across five activity streams: national leadership in suicide prevention (one project); national leadership in suicide prevention research (one project); Centre of Best Practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide prevention (one project); national media and communications activities (seven projects); and national support services for individuals at risk of suicide (eight projects).	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KPMG has been engaged to undertake an evaluation and review of the program with the aim of providing advice on how the program The final report was provided on 24 March 2021 and is being considered the by the Department.
12.	National Suicide Prevention Trial	The trial implements a systems-based approach to suicide prevention through the 12 National Suicide Prevention Trial sites. Each site is focusing on an at-risk population, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, LGBTIQ people, youth, men, veterans and older people.	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The University of Melbourne conducted an evaluation of the National Suicide Prevention Trial. The final report submitted in December 2020 is being considered by the Department. KPMG has been engaged to undertake the analysis of suicide prevention trial evaluation findings across the trial activity that has been underway across the country (Victoria and Lifespan in NSW and the ACT in addition to the Commonwealth trials.
13.	StandBy Support After Suicide	The StandBy Support After Suicide service provides coordinated postvention support to individuals and communities impacted by suicide.	Complete	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> StandBy commissioned their own independent evaluation in 2018. https://standbysupport.com.au/evaluation
14.	Way Back Support Service	The Way Back Support Service provides non-clinical, assertive outreach, follow up care and practical support to individuals after a suicide attempt or suicidal crisis.	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beyond Blue has directly contracted Nous to undertake an evaluation of the Way Back Support Service.
15.	National Initial Assessment and Referral in Mental Healthcare Project (IAR Project)	The IAR guidance and decision-support tool is designed to assist clinicians to assess and assign an appropriate level of care for a person seeking mental health support. Information gathered through initial assessment is used to recommend a service type and intensity (level of care), inform a referral decision and support consumer choice. The IAR Project engaged nine Primary Health Networks to trial implementation of the IAR guidance and toolkit in primary care settings.	Complete	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National IAR Implementation Review (the review) conducted by the University of Melbourne. The review provided the Department of Health with an evidence base to stepped care initial assessment from the practical perspective and a standardised approach to support and validate clinical decision making.
16.	Primary Health Network (PHN) Mental Health Reform Lead Site Project	Ten PHNs (referred to as 'Lead Sites') were selected to act as mental health improvement leaders in the following focus areas: (1) Regional planning and service integration; (2) Stepped care (offering a range of treatments, from the least to the most resource intensive, matched to the individual's needs); (3) Low intensity services; (4) Services for youth with, or at risk of, severe mental illness; and (5) Clinical care coordination for adults with severe and complex mental illness.	Complete	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The evaluation, conducted by the University of Melbourne, provided the Department of Health with an evidence base on effective approaches to planning, integration and delivery of mental health services.

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Department of Health

Select Committee on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

Inquiry into Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

18 March 2021

PDR Number: IQ21-000067

Funding and programs for 16 years and younger

Spoken

Hansard Page number: 11

Member: Julian Simmonds

Question:

Mr SIMMONDS: I will be very quick because of time. We just heard from the Productivity Commission about their concerns around a gap for new parents and particularly for young kids as well in terms of mental health education and intervening early. I've gone through your submission. I see you're very focused on youth, headspace and 16- to 24-year-olds. Have we got any funding or any programs that specifically relate to younger than 16 or that goes into schools et cetera?

Mr Roddam: Yes. headspace starts at the age of 12, so it's probably the zero to 12 age group that we don't have anything specifically funded for from the Commonwealth beyond programs like beyondblue's Be You program, which works with educators in schools, and some other things. I know the Mental Health Commission is on after us, and they're developing at the moment a child mental health strategy. It's probably more appropriate for them to tell you more about that, but it is really an area of focus for us. Because of the role of the states in that age group more broadly and in schools, I would see that as issues we really want to progress this year as part of the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention—

Mr SIMMONDS: But it is a gap from the department's and the federal government's point of view. We're not doing a lot of that zero to 12 space the moment. It's not a criticism. You identify gaps. You may as well—

Mr Roddam: There are things that both we and the states fund. I would put it that way. I wouldn't say either level of government is completely absent from that age group. But clearly the point of the strategy that the Mental Health Commission can talk about is to create a better system in that regard.

Ms Rishniw: It is obviously the gap that was identified by the Productivity Commission.

Mr SIMMONDS: I certainly view it as a gap. Perhaps you could take on notice whether there is anything else that we're doing in that space. If you could send it in in writing, that would

be helpful.

Ms Rishniw: We haven't mentioned the perinatal funding that we've done. There's certainly a bit, particularly with new parents and postpartum depression, that's quite well resourced, and we have done a lot of work there. But, as my colleague said, I think we can do more, particularly in early childhood. The other point to make there is obviously the role of states and territories, particularly once we're reaching into schools and looking at what we can do with states and territories around the services there.

Answer:

The Australian Government invests in a range of programs and initiatives to support positive mental health and wellbeing of children up to 12 years of age. This includes:

- \$154.9 million over seven years from 2016–17 for Beyond Blue to deliver the National Mental Health Initiative (known as Be You). Be You promotes mental health and wellbeing for children and young people by offering educators in early learning services and schools with evidence-based online professional learning, complemented by a range of practical tools and resources to support the mental health of children and young people.
- \$2.5 million over four years from 2019–20 for Smiling Mind for its Regional and Rural Schools Program. This program will support 600 disadvantaged and rural, regional and remote primary schools nationally to implement mindfulness practices into their curriculum to support mentally healthy and resilient children.
- \$50.7 million over seven years from 2016–17 for Emerging Minds to deliver the National Workforce Centre in Child Mental Health initiative. The Centre assists professionals and organisations who work with children and/or parents/families to have the skills to identify, assess and support children at risk of mental health conditions.
- \$1.5 million over three years from 2019–20 for the Raising Children Network for the Supporting Parent Mental Health Literacy Program to design and develop an app to deliver regular mental health focused messages to parents. The Program aims to improve mental health literacy of Australian parents, giving them the confidence to identify the signs of social or emotional problems in their children and know when to seek help if their child experiences a mental health issue.
- \$550,000 over two years from 2019–20 for the Satellite Foundation in partnership with Emerging Minds to provide support to children and young people who have a parent or guardian with a mental illness. This funding enables the Satellite Foundation to expand its support programs to children and young people during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, being developed by the National Mental Health Commission, will guide and inform the Government's future investment in the health and wellbeing of children.

The Government is also investing in a range of initiatives to support the mental health of parents during the perinatal period. The perinatal period covers the period from conception to the end of the first year after birth. Initiatives include:

- \$43.9 million over seven years from 2018–19 for the Perinatal Mental Health and Wellbeing Program. This program is designed to improve the range of services supporting the mental health and wellbeing of expecting and new parents. It will also deliver support to parents and families experiencing distress after birth trauma, miscarriage, stillbirth or infant death to help prevent mental ill health.
- \$36.0 million over three years from 2020–21 for the National Perinatal Mental Health Check. This initiative is designed to improve access to perinatal mental health screening and strengthen electronic capture of screening data by states and territories.

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18 March 2021

PDR Number: IQ21-000068

Alternative funding models for headspace

Spoken

Hansard Page number: 12

Member: Julian Simmonds

Question:

Mr SIMMONDS: Will you take on notice providing the committee with any further work that the department's done on alternative funding models for headspace? Is that possible?

Mr Roddam: Yes.

Ms Rishniw: We can take that on notice.

Answer:

The Department is in a process of continual monitoring and assessment of headspace and other programs in order to consider and provide advice on potential enhancements including regarding funding models. The Department has engaged KPMG, in consortium with the Social Policy Research Centre of the University of NSW and batyr, to deliver an independent evaluation of the National headspace Program. The evaluation commenced in July 2020 and is anticipated to conclude in December 2021.

The evaluation aims to provide a greater understanding of the appropriateness, effectiveness and outcomes of the National headspace Program to inform future policy decisions about how headspace is implemented. The evaluation will consider the future design of the program, including the sustainability of current funding arrangements.

To increase support to young people, the Government is investing \$152 million over seven years (2018-19 to 2024-25) to support activities to address demand and reduce wait times at headspace services through the *headspace Demand Management and Enhancement Program*.

The aims and objectives of this Program are to reduce wait times and improve the quality of headspace services. These will be achieved by addressing demand through strategies that increase service delivery, streamlining processes and capital works enhancements to the network.

Funding is provided to Primary Health Networks as the commissioners of headspace services and headspace National through annual targeted competitive grant rounds. These rounds are assessed on the balance of demonstrated need, project design, efficient and economical use of funds, and ongoing sustainability.