

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Public Hearing – 22 September 2020 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Senate Select Committee on COVID-19 - Commonwealth Funding - Question 2

Question reference number: SQ20-000604

Senator: Kristina Keneally

Type of Question: Spoken. Hansard Page/s: 47

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 07 October 2020

Question:

Senator KENEALLY: For us as a committee, we hear an announcement in March that there's going to be this initial funding—and 'initial' is a key word that I'm going to come back to—of \$150 million, and we find out in the hearing today, this morning, that only 50 per cent of that has actually gone out to service providers. I understand that it was finally distributed to states and territories on 16 September. So, the crucial question here is: in an initial funding, how can we as a committee be confident that that funding is going where it's needed and it's not just some bureaucratic bungle? I will leave that to you to come back to us on, as a question on notice. But let me go to this issue of data.

Answer:

The Commonwealth has released the total \$130 million under the National Partnership on COVID-19 Domestic and Family Violence Responses to state and territory governments through four payments:

- \$27.8 million in May 2020
- \$4.7 million in June 2020
- \$29.25 million in July or August (as some states did not meet milestones required under the NPA by the July payment date)
- \$68.25 million in September 2020.

States and territories are responsible for the provision of funds to frontline services and are due to provide reports in November 2020 and March 2021 outlining outcomes and expenditure under the National Partnership, including how they have used the funding to ensure the safety of women and their children, experiencing, or at risk of experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence during COVID-19.

The objectives of the National Partnership include that funded services should consider the needs of particularly vulnerable cohorts, such as:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples,
- culturally and linguistically diverse peoples,
- women on temporary visas,
- people with disability,
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and gender diverse, Intersex, Queer and questioning (LGBTIQ) communities, and
- people living in regional, rural and remote locations.

The National Partnership specifies that states can direct the funding to:

- safer housing and emergency accommodation,
- counselling and outreach services,
- crisis support and helplines,
- men's behaviour change programs and perpetrator interventions,
- assist frontline services to manage increase in demand,
- explore new technology-based service delivery methods,
- respond to regional, rural and remote service delivery challenges,
- practices that protect frontline staff and clients from COVID-19, and
- respond to other emerging needs as agreed by Women's Safety Ministers.

The remaining \$20 million under the Domestic Violence Support Package was directed to boost existing Commonwealth programs as well as fund new initiatives for families affected by, or at risk of experiencing, domestic and family violence during COVID-19.