

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

National Mental Health Commission

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

15 September 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000670

Date on which March package was finalised by National Mental Health Commission

Spoken

Hansard Page number: 37

Senator: Katy Gallagher

Question:

CHAIR: So you became aware of what the actual package was that had been ticked off by the ERC—

Ms Morgan: By the time it was announced, yes.

CHAIR: The day before, or?

Ms Morgan: Alison, do you remember?

Dr Morehead: I think that, generally, as public servants we participate in those processes without being too specific about dates when certain things happen once it goes into that formal government process. I think Ms Morgan is saying that she was involved in helping with the package and then, obviously, was there on the day that it was announced.

CHAIR: Yes, I'm aware of that but I'm not aware of why you wouldn't provide dates. We are able to ask for dates.

Dr Morehead: Dates for specific meetings, yes.

CHAIR: And for your state of knowledge; that's certainly something within the scope of this committee.

Dr Morehead: Of course. I was aware at the time it would have been finalised before going up for the appropriate processes to be approved within government. I would have been aware of when it was going up. Again, I cannot recall the specific date that would have been. Then, in the lead-up to it I certainly remember preparing and having briefing notes prepared for me to participate in the announcement. It was Sunday 29th when it was announced.

CHAIR: Alright. Maybe you could take that on notice—

Dr Morehead: Of course, yes.

Answer:

Ms Morgan provided advice on the formulation of the mental health package from inception. Following a request from the Minister for Health for advice, Ms Morgan met with senior health officials on 21 March to discuss a draft mental health response. On 24 March 2020, Ms Morgan brought together sector representatives and experts in an online roundtable to hear sector views on emerging priorities. Following the roundtable Ms Morgan continued to provide advice on the structure of the package components to the Department of Health. However, this did not include advice on specific funding allocations. Specific funding allocations were a decision of Cabinet.