



**THE HON MARK BUTLER MP  
MINISTER FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND AGEING**

The Hon John Murphy MP  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Petitions  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Mr Murphy

Thank you for your letter of 23 August 2011 regarding a petition seeking funding for a **headspace** centre for Knox, in outer eastern Melbourne. I apologise for the delay in responding.

I note the petition was presented on 23 August 2011 and considered at a recent meeting of the Standing Committee on Petitions. Under Standing Order 209 (b), as the Minister responsible for the administration of the matter raised in the petition, I am responding within 90 days of its presentation.

I appreciate the level of community interest that has emerged about the successful **headspace** model and that many communities are keen to have a site established in their area. Access to effective and responsive mental health services is clearly important, and for this reason the Australian Government has made, and is continuing to make, substantial investments to improve mental health services, especially for young people.

The 2011-12 Budget allocated \$197.3 million over five years, on top of a current commitment of \$133.3 million to 2013-14, to expand existing and establish new youth focused mental health services through the **headspace** program. Specifically, the 2011-12 Budget measure provides funding for 90 fully sustainable **headspace** sites across Australia by 2014-15. Once all 90 sites are fully established, **headspace** will help up to 72,000 young people each year.

On 24 October 2011, the Prime Minister, the Hon Julia Gillard MP, announced 15 locations for establishment of new **headspace** sites, confirming Melbourne - Outer East (Ringwood/Knox) as one of the new locations.

The announcement of the 15 new locations, and two outpost services, will take the number of **headspace** sites around the country to 55, with an additional 35 locations to be announced by 2015. The new sites have been chosen in conjunction with **headspace**, and in consultation with state and territory governments, on the basis of community need, youth populations, access to existing services and local capacity.



In addition to the roll-out of further **headspace** sites, a telephone and web-based support service for young people building on the **headspace** platform has also recently begun providing services. This **eheadspace** service provides free, confidential and anonymous counselling services to young people between the ages of 12 and 25 years with, or at risk of developing, a mild to moderate mental illness. The service also provides referrals to other appropriate services, including mental health, alcohol and drug, social and vocational services.

This service is an alternative approach for young people to access support and help, and will use innovative online communication tools that many young people have indicated is a preferred way of communication and accessing support services. Further information on the **eheadspace** service is available at [www.eheadspace.org.au](http://www.eheadspace.org.au)

I would appreciate it if you could convey this information to the next meeting of the Standing Committee on Petitions.

I trust that the above information is of use.

Yours sincerely

**MARK BUTLER**

18 NOV 2011

