



Senator the Hon Jacinta Collins
Minister for Mental Health and Ageing
Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate
Manager of Government Business in the Senate

Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

30 JUL 2013

The Hon John Murphy MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr ~~Murphy~~

Thank you for your letter of 19 June 2013 to my predecessor, the Hon Mark Butler MP, regarding a petition drawing attention to the prevalence of suicide and available mental health services on the Fleurieu Peninsula, South Australia.

I appreciate the time taken by the petitioners to share their views relating to mental health services on the Fleurieu Peninsula. The Commonwealth and state and territory governments share responsibility for the delivery of mental health services. State and territory governments primarily provide specialised community mental health services and inpatient care for people with severe mental illness, while the Commonwealth Government complements this through funding primary mental health care, subsidising access to private specialist medical services through Medicare, and funding programs targeting mild to moderate mental health disorders and early intervention.

The Australian Government has made mental health a priority with the 2011-12 Budget *Delivering National Mental Health Reform* package investing \$2.2 billion over five years to improve the lives of Australians experiencing and affected by mental illness – through better access to services, better detection, better targeting and better coordination.

Under the reforms, \$205.9 million over five years is being provided for the Access to Allied Psychological Services (ATAPS) which provides people with access to up to 12 sessions each calendar year with a mental health professional, following referral from a General Practitioner. It helps those who have a mild to moderate mental illness who may not be able to easily access services. On the Fleurieu Peninsula, funding of \$2.76 million is provided to Fleurieu Kangaroo Island Medicare Local to deliver this initiative.

In addition, \$200 million over five years is being provided for the National Partnership Agreement Supporting National Mental Health Reform. Through this initiative, states and territories are introducing services to assist people with mental illness who are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness to secure or maintain stable accommodation. This will contribute to reducing homelessness among people with chronic mental illness through accommodation support and improved discharge planning in emergency departments and major hospitals.

Of particular relevance to the residents of the Fleurieu Peninsula, this agreement is providing funding for the expansion of the Assessment and Crisis Intervention Service (ACIS) teams. This project will establish an additional late shift to the current ACIS roster to allow the service to operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. ACIS provides services including an initial comprehensive assessment, case write up, and preparation of correspondence to the consumer's General Practitioner or key worker.

The Government recognises the challenge of accessing face-to-face mental health services in regional areas and is complementing existing mental health services with an e-Mental Health Strategy to provide evidence-based and accessible telephone and online services. In the last 12 months the Government has established mindhealthconnect and mindspot.

Mindhealthconnect, at www.mindhealthconnect.org.au, is the first national online mental health portal providing access to Australian Government funded online and telephone based mental health services for those experiencing anxiety, depression and/or psychosocial distress.

Mindspot, at www.mindspot.org.au, is a virtual clinic providing free cognitive behavioural therapy to people with mild to moderate anxiety and depression in real time with a trained therapist provided online or by telephone.

The Government appreciates the challenges of meeting the mental health needs of the expanding population in the Fleurieu Peninsula and is continuing to work in partnership with the states and territories to improve access to mental health services across Australia and reduce the prevalence of suicide.

I trust that the above information is of use.

Yours sincerely

Jacinta Collins