



THE HON MARK BUTLER MP
MINISTER FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND AGEING
MINISTER FOR HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS
MINISTER FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION
MINISTER ASSISTING THE PRIME MINISTER ON MENTAL HEALTH REFORM

19 JUN 2013

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

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
PETITIONS

Dear Mr Murphy

Thank you for your letter of 3 June 2013 enclosing a petition regarding the establishment of a *headspace* centre in Griffith, NSW.

I note the concerns raised by the community about the young people of Griffith and surrounding Western Riverina towns and the availability of mental health services in the area. 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 within their area.

The Australian Government has, through the 2011-12 Budget, allocated \$197.3 million over five years to expand the *headspace* program. This will result in funding for 90 *headspace* sites across Australia by 2014-15 that, once fully established, will help up to 72,000 young people each year. To date, 70 *headspace* sites have been announced. The remaining 20 *headspace* locations will be announced progressively to June 2015.

To support this expansion, *headspace* and the Government have developed a robust methodology for selecting *headspace* locations, which is based primarily on youth population. The methodology also gives priority to areas experiencing social disadvantage, or where factors such as youth suicide and substance abuse indicate a high need for improved youth mental health services. The locations identified are also discussed with the states and territories.

The Government and *headspace* have also sought to strike an appropriate balance between the number of services located in regional Australia and the number of services located in metropolitan Australia. To date, half of the announced sites (35) are located in rural and regional areas.

Unfortunately, not every community is able to secure a physical *headspace* site, and the Government and *headspace* are therefore working together to expand the range of services provided online and through other forms of outreach. *eheadspace* is providing free, confidential and anonymous telephone and web-based support services to young people between the ages of 12-25 years with, or at risk of developing, a mild to moderate mental illness. More information can be found at www.eheadspace.org.au.

I have noted the petition for a *headspace* service in Griffith and appreciate the community's interest in the establishment of additional *headspace* services in New South Wales.

Yours sincerely /

MARK BUTLER

18 JUN 2013