

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2010-11, 23 February 2011

Question: E11-040

OUTCOME 11: Mental Health

Topic: SISTERS OF CHARITY OUTREACH

Written Question on Notice

Senator Colbeck asked:

- a) What discussions and correspondence has occurred between the Department and Sisters of Charity since 5 November 2010 when the Department responded to a letter?
- b) What existing Commonwealth Mental Health programs may be options for a continued funding stream for Sisters of Charity?
- c) What provision does the Department deem will be necessary for the Devonport community in terms of new mental health services should Sisters of Charity discontinue its service when the current funding period ends in August 2011?
- d) Can the Department provide statistics for mental illness and suicide rates in Tasmania, broken down to localities or regions where possible?
- e) At what state are the negotiations between the Commonwealth and the Tasmania Government for a further funding contract for operation?
- f) Will these negotiations be finalised before June 30, 2011?
- g) Will the outcome of these negotiations be known before June 30, 2011?

Answer:

- a) Departmental Officers spoke with Mr Peter Hudson, the CEO of Sisters of Charity (SOC) in early and mid December and again on 23 December 2010.

The Department provided SOC with a Fact Sheet on 6 January 2011 listing potential alternative avenues for client service and funding opportunities.

A Departmental Officer met with Mr Hudson and two other Directors from SOC in Melbourne on 10 February 2011 to discuss options for the organisation including transitioning clients to the local *Access to Allied Psychological Services* program.

On 17 February 2011, Mr Hudson emailed the Department further information on SOC's clients. The Department acknowledged this email on the same day.

On 22 February and 7 March 2011 Mr Hudson rang the Department to discuss avenues of inquiry for alternative potential forms of funding.

On 29 March 2011 Mr Hudson emailed the Department concerning the SOC Board's decision on the future of the service.

On 8 April 2011 the Department emailed Mr Hudson a letter dated 6 April 2011 in response to SOC's email of 29 March 2011.

On 12 April 2011 Mr Hudson called the Department to advise that he had notified staff and sent letters to clients about the closure of the service.

On 13 April 2011 Mr Hudson provided a copy of their media release to the Department, which was acknowledged.

- b) None have been identified.
- c) The Department has offered GP North West an extra \$55,000 (GST inclusive) in funding for the *Access to Allied Psychological Services* program to June 2011. This will provide a transition service for SOC's clients who have a diagnosis of a mental health problem and ensure their ongoing access to mental health support through other existing services. Consideration is also currently being given to temporarily supplementing the funding of the *Access to Allied Psychological Services* program in North West Tasmania in 2011-12 to ensure that SOC's clients receive sufficient support through their transition to other services.
- d) The 2007 National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing is the main source of data for calculating mental illness prevalence rates. Prevalence rates are calculated on a national basis, with state and territory figures not available.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is the statutory authority responsible for the routine collation of data on suicide and other causes of death. The ABS released *Causes of Death, Australia 2008* in March 2010. In 2008, there were 2,191 suicides registered in Australia. Tasmanian suicides accounted for 75 of these deaths.

e, f and g)

There has been no agreement that the Commonwealth negotiate with the Tasmanian Government for a further funding contract for operation of the SOC service. The Department has been liaising with the Tasmanian Government and the SOC to ensure that transition services are made available to support SOC's clients who have a diagnosed mental health problem.