

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2010-11, 23 February 2011

Question: E11-177

OUTCOME 0: Whole of Portfolio

Topic: MENTAL HEALTH AND HEALTH REFORM

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

Given the new Health Reform Mark II, does this now mean that there will be no extra money forthcoming from the Australian government specifically for community mental health services?

Answer:

Through the 2011-12 Budget the Australian Government is investing \$1.5 billion over five years on mental health reform, reaffirming the Government's determination to improve the mental health system for Australians living with mental illness, their families and carers.

The Australian Government will provide national leadership to deliver a mental health system that gives Australians with mental illness timely access to support, and the best chance to recover and stay well in the community, through:

- \$571.3 million in more and better coordinated services for people with severe and persistent mental illness;
- \$220.3 million to strengthen primary care and better target services to those most in need, such as Indigenous communities and socioeconomically disadvantaged areas;
- \$491.7 million in early intervention and prevention to better detect potential mental health problems in the early years, and support young people who struggle with mental illness;
- \$2.4 million to increase social and economic participation for people with mental illness in addition to the Government's Building Australia's Future Workforce reforms;
- \$201.3 million for a National Partnership Agreement (NP) on mental health to encourage the states and territories to invest more in priority areas including accommodation support and presentation, admission and discharge planning in emergency departments; and
- \$12.2 million to ensure quality, accountability and innovation in mental health services now and for the long-term through the establishment of Australia's first National Mental Health Commission. The Commission will provide leadership and drive a more transparent and accountable mental health system in both the health and non-health spheres, and provide an Annual Report, through the Prime Minister, to Parliament.

Through the proposed NP, the Government will take a national leadership role and encourage states and territories to address known gaps in the mental health system. A national funding pool will be established, and states and territories will be invited to bid through a competitive process. Proposals are expected to focus on the priority areas including accommodation support and presentation, admission and discharge planning in emergency departments.

Specifically, the 2011-12 Budget mental health package will also enhance community mental health services for young people by increasing the number of Early Psychosis Prevention Intervention Centres (EPPIC), also through partnership with states and territories. The Government will be providing \$222.4 million over five years, and seek matching contributions from the States and Territories, to provide up to 12 EPPICs. In addition to the four centres committed to in the 2010 Budget, this will deliver up to 16 new EPPICs around the country.

Combined with investments announced during 2010-11, these initiatives will deliver \$2.2 billion in additional funding for mental health services over the next five years.

Health Reform

Public hospitals are significant providers of mental health services, including non-admitted services to people in the community, and it is expected that these services will benefit from the increased Commonwealth funding for public hospitals from activity based funding.

The NP on Improving Public Hospital Services provides states and territories with funding for new sub acute beds. Under the NP, the proposed allocation of these beds or equivalent services is identified through Implementation Plans submitted by each jurisdiction for Commonwealth approval. While this process is not yet complete, a number of states have committed to allocating a number of their new sub acute beds to mental health.

Clause 61 of the COAG Heads of Agreement on national health reform, signed on 13 February 2011, states that the Commonwealth, states and territories agree to pursue further reforms in mental health over the next three years.