

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2010-11, 23 February 2011

Question: E11-246

OUTCOME 11: Mental Health

Topic: PROGRESS ON MENTAL HEALTH REFORM MEASURES

Hansard Page: CA 33

Senator Brown asked:

You talked about Minister Butler when he first became the minister travelling around and talking to consumers and carers and organisations. That was in November. I know he has been very busy, but can the department or perhaps the Minister tell us, from going out and understanding the issues and being informed-and I understand one of the reasons he went out was so he could be better informed about future options-what steps have been taken since the minister has finished his visits around the country?

Answer:

Since his appointment as the first Minister for Mental Health, Minister Butler has undertaken a broad range of stakeholder engagement activities in order to gain a first hand understanding of the needs of people with mental illness, including holding national mental health consumer and carer forums in November and December 2011.

As part of this stakeholder engagement, the Minister, at the request of the Prime Minister and Minister Roxon, established the Mental Health Expert Working Group, a time-limited working group that is providing confidential, strategic and practical cross-sectoral advice to assist in informing the Government's development of future reform options. The Group has met three times and is scheduled to meet again on 29 March 2011.

The Minister also continues to seek advice from the National Advisory Council on Mental Health (NACMH) established to provide advice to the Minister on a range of mental health issues. The most recent NACMH meeting was held on 24 January 2011 and was chaired by Minister Butler.

The Council of Australian Governments, on 13 February 2011, agreed to discuss mental health at its next meeting.

The Government will use the advice and information gathered from a wide range of experts and members of the community to inform and develop the Commonwealth's position on a comprehensive approach to longer term mental health care reform.