

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2016 - 2017, 1 March 2017

Ref No: SQ17-000283

OUTCOME: 6 - Ageing and Aged Care

Topic: Mental Health Services in Residential Care

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Polley, Helen

Question:

- a) How are psychological services funded for people living in residential care?
- b) Fairfax Media reported (<http://www.smh.com.au/national/health/nursing-homes-story-headline-20161228-gtiqc6.html>) that they contacted 20 randomly selected residential care facilities to ask if they would fund a depressed resident's treatment by a psychologist – and all said they would not. Is this correct? A department official confirmed in this report that older Australians in residential care are not eligible for mental health treatment plans and associated psychological therapies provided by the Better Access Medicare program. Is this correct? They said aged care providers are required to "facilitate ... access" for residents to health practitioners of their choosing, such as providing transport. Is this correct?

Answer:

- a) Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACF) residents can access mental health services, including services provided by psychologists, mental health workers and occupational therapists, under the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) Chronic Disease Management (CDM) arrangements (MBS Items 721 – 731).

Mental health services may also be available to RACF residents through state/territory government funded specialised and community mental health services.

- b) RACF residents are currently not eligible for a GP Mental Health Treatment Plan funded through the *Better Access to Psychiatrists, Psychologists and General practitioners through the Medicare Benefits Schedule (Better Access) initiative*.

Under Commonwealth Law, RACFs are required to ensure they promote and achieve the care recipients' physical and mental health at optimum level, in partnership between each care recipient (or his/her representative) and the health care team. How this is implemented in each RACF may vary, and available data does not quantify the number or type of services delivered.