

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2016 - 2017, 1 March 2017

Ref No: SQ17-000445

OUTCOME: 2 - Health Access and Support Services

Topic: Suicide Prevention Trial Sites

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: O'Neill, Deborah

Question:

On 11 August, 2016 the Prime Minister distributed a media release titled 'Government supports veterans and ADF personnel'.

In this media release the Prime Minister made reference to the 12 suicide prevention trial sites. The media release stated: "This (North Queensland) will be one of 12 innovative, front-line trials in our fight against suicide which will improve understanding of the challenges and work to develop best-practice services which we can be applied nationwide. All of these sites will incorporate a focus on veterans and Defence personnel".

During Estimates on 1 March, 2017 the Department listed the locations of the 12 suicide prevention trials and for some, what those trial sites would focus on. The only suicide prevention trial site to have a veterans' focus was Townsville. Can the Department explain why this was not reported and mentioned during Estimates and why the other 11 trial sites will not have a veterans and Defence personnel focus as the Prime Minister's media release states? When did the Department of Health have discussions about these 12 trial sites with Prime Minister and Cabinet in relation to them having a veterans and Defence personnel focus?

Answer:

All Australian Government suicide prevention activities, including those commissioned by Primary Health Networks are aware of the issues surrounding veterans and other populations which may be at a higher risk of suicide and self-harm. All suicide prevention trial sites will provide enhanced services for people who have attempted or are at higher risk of suicide, including veterans and current ADF members.

The Townsville trial has the particular feature of having a high population of both serving and veteran populations which makes it ideal to trial and evaluate specific interventions designed for the veteran population, particularly at times which seem to increase stress, such as the transition to civilian life.

There was consultation between the Department of Health and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet prior to the 11 August 2016 announcement of Townsville as a suicide prevention trial region.