

**Senate Community Affairs Committee**

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

**Additional Estimates 2016 - 2017, 1 March 2017**

**Ref No:** SQ17-000456

**OUTCOME:** 2 - Health Access and Support Services

**Topic:** Mental Health Workforce

**Type of Question:** Written Question on Notice

**Senator:** O'Neill, Deborah

**Question:**

Does the Department believe the mental health workforce currently correlates with the mental health system?

**Answer:**

On 26 November 2015, the Australian Government announced its response to *Contributing Lives, Thriving Communities* - the National Mental Health Commission's ('the Commission') Review of Mental Health Programmes and Services ('the Review').

The Commission's Review Report detailed a number of recommendations in relation to education and training initiatives and resources to support the mental health workforce in delivering evidence-based services as part of a stepped care model.

The Australian Government addressed the Commission's recommendations in its response. Strategic Direction 8 encompasses building workforce and research capacity to support systems changes, and is further detailed in *A Summary of Actions within the Australian Government Response to Recommendations to the Review of Mental Health Programmes and Services* at Attachment A.

In keeping with the Commission's recommendations, primary mental health care reforms are underpinned by the recognition of the need to support Primary Health Networks (PHNs) to deliver mental health treatment services for people with or at risk of developing a mental health disorder, and to provide them with appropriate and relevant training and materials for the mental health workforce delivering evidence-based mental health services.

**Summary of Actions within the Australian Government Response to Recommendations to the Review of Mental Health Programmes and Services (extract)**

*Strategic Direction 8 – Build workforce and research capacity to support systems change*

- The Commonwealth supports promotion of sustainable education and training for the workforce to support better outcomes for individuals impacted by mental illness. Mental health is an existing component of undergraduate training in a number of health disciplines.
- As outlined under recommendation 15, a national workforce support initiative will assist clinical and non-clinical professionals and services who work with children to identify, support and refer children at risk and to promote resilience building. This initiative will particularly support providers working with children who would benefit from early intervention, including those that have experienced trauma, and will support professionals in working with parents and families of these children.
- The Commonwealth will ensure existing education and training initiatives are sharpened and refocused to better meet the needs of professionals in a sustainable and evidence based way. Additional training and resources needed to support the mental health workforce in delivering evidence based services will be considered as part of further development, trialling and implementation of a stepped care model.