

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2011-2012, 30/31 May 2011

Question: E11-212

OUTCOME 11: Mental Health

Topic: BETTER ACCESS CLIENTS

Written Question on Notice

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

Answer to question on notice E11-243 from previous estimates indicates that in 2008, 68 per cent of Better Access clients were new customers and in 2009, this percentage had dropped to 57 per cent. Further to evidence at the hearing, does the evidence suggest that a program designed for short, sharp (cognitive behavioural therapy) CBT-based interventions is now being used more to provide ongoing or continual mental health care service to the same clients? (Refer page 47 Hansard 30 May.)

Answer:

The evaluation of Better Access provides information covering the period 2008 to 2009 on the number and percentage of persons who had received Better Access services for the first time in each year (new consumers) and who had used Better Access services prior to that year (existing consumers).

Of the more than 950,000 consumers who had received at least one Better Access service in 2008, more than two thirds (68 per cent) were first-time Better Access users, ie they had received services for the first time in 2008. Therefore approximately one third (32 per cent) of people were existing consumers ie they had received at least one Better Access service prior to 2008.

In 2009, more than half (57 per cent) of the 1.1 million consumers served by Better Access were first-time users. Therefore almost half (43 per cent) of people were existing consumers, i.e they had received at least one Better Access service prior to 2009.

Of the more than 555,000 people who had received a GP Mental Health Treatment Plan (MBS item 2710) in 2008, the majority (87 per cent) did so for the first time. Only a small proportion (13 per cent) had received a GP Mental Health Treatment Plan prior to 2008.

This pattern was also similar for 2009. Of the more than 636,000 people who had received a GP Mental Health Treatment Plan in 2009, approximately three quarters (77 per cent) did so for the first time with 23 per cent having received a GP Mental Health Treatment Plan prior to 2009.

This data does not necessarily suggest the Better Access initiative is now being used more to provide ongoing or continual mental health care to the same clients. The findings of the Better Access evaluation showed that almost three-quarters of people who accessed services used between one and six sessions a year, with an average of five sessions comprising a treatment

course. After four years of operation of the program there is a greater likelihood that some consumers will have used Better Access mental health services in more than one year.