

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2010-11, 22 October 2010

Question: E10-420

OUTCOME 11: Mental Health

Topic: SUICIDE PREVENTION

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Senator Scullion asked:

In regard to the Northern Territory, I think there were six Indigenous people under the age of 18 who took their lives in four weeks. Whilst we are talking about a spike, as I understand it, from what I could see there was no clear association as to the same community or the same connectivity as we have seen in other spikes in years gone by—for instance, in places like the Tiwi Islands where there was a small island and it was associated with grief about the last one, so they were not copy-cat but there was a lot that happened at the same time. These appeared to be quite disparate—perhaps the same circumstances but disparate. Have you done any work on whether there is any connection? Or is this just an anomaly?

Answer:

There has been an increase in suspected suicides by young people in the Northern Territory over the last few months. As these are yet to be confirmed as suicides by the coroner it is too early to confirm whether there is an actual spike in the number.

There is work being done by the Northern Territory (NT) Government's Department of Health and Families to determine whether there is a pattern relating to the suspected suicides. The NT Office of the Department of Health and Ageing is actively monitoring developments.

The NT's Top End, General Practice Network is funded for \$104,355 from 2009 to 2011 under the Australian Government's National Suicide Prevention Program (NSPP) to enhance community capacity in suicide prevention and postvention support, with a view to a better understanding of the related issues of mental health, well-being and suicide.

In addition, the Mental Health Association of Central Australia is also funded under the NSPP for \$257,773 from 2009 to 2011 to deliver a "train the trainer" program aimed at reducing the incidence of suicide in remote communities.

Through its \$274 million election commitment *Taking Action to Tackle Suicide*, the Australian Government committed to redoubling its national efforts to prevent the tragedy of suicide.

The Government will invest:

\$74.5 million over four years to establish and expand suicide prevention activities in communities around Australia;

\$23.2 million over four years to provide more mental health services and programs targeted towards men;

\$61.3 million over four years to promote resilience and good mental health in young people; and

\$115.0 million over three years to fund more frontline services and support for people with severe mental illness who are at risk of suicide.

These measures build on existing health and hospital reforms already underway, which will lead to the building of better health services for all Australians, including better mental health services