

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2012-2013, 17 & 19 October 2012

Question: E12-084

OUTCOME 11: Mental Health

Topic: MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN RURAL AREAS

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Number of pages: 1

Senator: Senator Wright

Question:

In answers to estimates questions on notice from the Budget Estimates 2012-2013, the answer to question E12-196 from the Department states "the 2011-12 Budget Delivering National Mental Health Reform package comprises a number of national initiatives. Many of these initiatives will provide services to rural areas, but it is not possible to accurately determine the amount of funding dedicated to rural mental health services under this package."

- a) Why is this the case?
- b) How, then, does the Department measure or assess whether mental health services are reaching rural and remote areas of Australia?

Answer:

- a) The 2011-12 Budget Delivering National Mental Health Reform package includes some measures which expand on existing programs. In these cases it is not possible to distinguish between expenditure from existing allocations and that from the 2011-12 Budget to determine how much of the expanded funding is going towards services in rural areas. In addition, some measures in the Budget package are, in accordance with the design of the package, in the advanced stages of implementation planning, with service delivery to commence in 2013. The reach of these programs in different geographical locations will be measured over time as they are rolled out.
- b) The ability to determine the location of service delivery varies across Department of Health and Ageing programs, reflecting different reporting requirements and methods used to collect data.
For major programs, such as mental health services subsidised through the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS), the Department is able to identify and measure mental health service provision in rural and remote areas of Australia through service counts and expenditure.

For other programs the Department requires funding recipients to report on the delivery of services to consumers based on a number of variables, such as age and geographic setting.