

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2016 - 2017, 19 October 2016

Ref No: SQ16-000728

OUTCOME: 2 - Health Access and Support Services

Topic: Suicide Prevention Target

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Polley, Helen

Question:

Given the recent ABS suicide figures and the mental health sector's support for a suicide prevention target can the Department explain the Government's reluctance to adopt the National Mental Health Commission's Suicide Prevention Target of 50 per cent over 10 years? Has the Department ever given any advice or analysis to the Health Minister about adopting a suicide prevention target?

Answer:

The Government worked with states and territories, experts and representatives from the mental health sector to inform the Australian Government Response to the National Mental Health Commission's Review of Mental Health Programmes and Services (the Response).

This included the establishment of a time-limited Expert Reference Group (ERG) to provide advice to inform the development and implementation of the Response. The ERG, chaired by former *beyondblue* Chief Executive Officer, Kate Carnell AO, brought together experts in mental health with extensive experience in key areas identified for reform, including primary mental health care, youth mental health and service integration. The group included a consumer representative.

In regards to suicide prevention, the ERG advised that while it is clearly necessary to use every available means to reduce suicide, they could not identify an evidence base to support the proposed target of a 50% reduction in suicide.

In addition to the considerations of the ERG, the department facilitated a targeted stakeholder consultation process including workshops with a broad range of stakeholders including consumer and carer representation. This enabled the sector and peak organisations to present views and advice on some of the implementation challenges and opportunities raised in the National Mental Health Commission's Review.

The advice from the ERG and consultation process informed advice to Government and the development of the Response which was released on 26 November 2015.