

Portfolio Committee No.2 – Budget Estimates
Responses to supplementary questions
Mental Health and Regional Health – 3 March 2022 (Q22/77)

Questions from the Hon Mark Buttigeig MLC *(on behalf of the Opposition)*

Rural Women’s Hidden Treasure Honour Roll

1. The Rural Women’s Hidden Treasure Honour Roll recognises the impact of women who volunteer their time to keep their communities strong and healthy. Why have no names been added to the Honour Roll since 2020?
 - a) Is the Minister aware that no rural women have been added to the honour roll since 2020?
 - b) Why hasn’t the volunteer work of rural women been recognised since 2020?

ANSWER

This question is a matter for the Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales.

The Illawarra Women’s Health Centre

2. The Illawarra Women’s Health Centre submitted the Ministry of Health-funded business case for an Illawarra Women’s Trauma Recovery Centre to the NSW Government (Women NSW) on 7 July 2021. Where is the review of this business case up to?
 - a) What is the usual timeframe for the review of a business case?
 - b) On receipt of this business case, the NSW Government was contractually obliged to ‘coordinate cross agency input on the proposal for consideration by the Domestic and Family Violence Reform Delivery Board’. Has this occurred?
 - i. If so, can the NSW Government supply details on the outcome of this consultation?
 - ii. How often does the Domestic and Family Violence Reform Delivery Board meet?
 - iii. Has it met since this business case was submitted?
 - iv. As the Delivery Board is not an authorising body, who will be making a recommendation on the business case?
 - c) What is the timeline in which the NSW Government will notify the Illawarra Women’s Health Centre regarding the outcome of their business case review?
 - d) Will the NSW Government commit to funding this Australia-first pilot?
 - e) If the responsibility for assessing the business case does not lie with the Minister for Women, why did the Minister meet with representatives from the Illawarra Women’s Health Centre to discuss the matter?
 - f) Has any other Minister met with the Illawarra Women’s Health Centre to discuss the business case?

ANSWER

This question is a matter for the Minister for Women's Safety and the Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence.

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Premier's Priority

3. What specific steps are being taken to ensure 50% of government sector senior leaders are women, as per the Premier's Priority?
 - a) Apart from the behaviourally-informed interventions designed to encourage women to reapply for seniors roles they have missed out on, how are women's progressions to leadership roles within the government sector being supported, given that women are less likely to apply for leadership roles than men?
 - b) Will the NSW Government guarantee it will reach its 50% target of senior leadership roles held by women by 2025?
4. What initiatives and spending is the Women's portfolio undertaking to support the leadership of women and girls to break down gendered stereotypes?
5. How many staff were employed in Women NSW before the last State election?
6. Does the Minister have a role in coordinating and advising on women's policy and programs across the NSW Government?

ANSWER

3. Information about what the NSW Government is doing to advance women's advancement in senior levels in the NSW Public Sector can be found here: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/premiers-priorities/world-class-public-service>
4. The NSW Government is committed to advancing women's economic opportunities through a range of programs. Specific information can be found on here: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/women-nsw>
5. In 2018 the women's portfolio focused on women's policy, domestic and family violence and sexual assault. The current Women NSW team focuses on women's policy. Therefore it would be misleading to compare the two structures.
6. The Minister for Women is responsible for advocating for the best interests of women and girls across NSW through policies and programs.

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Women's Strategy

7. The NSW Women's Strategy expires in 2022. Is a new strategy being created?
 - a) If so, who is being consulted as part of that process?
 - b) If not, when will the NSW Government commit to a new strategy?

8. How will the NSW Government evaluate the overall success of its focus areas in:
 - a) The economy?
 - b) Health and Wellbeing?
 - c) Participation and empowerment?

9. How often does the NSW Council for Women's Economic Opportunity meet?
 - a) On what dates has it met in 2020/21 and 2019/2020?
 - b) What input is it having into the development of NSW Government policy on women?

ANSWER

7. A new NSW Women's Strategy is being developed. Extensive consultation across government with relevant portfolio agencies, including members of the NSW Women's Strategy Interdepartmental Committee, and non-government stakeholders has begun along with public consultation.

8. The NSW Women's Strategy 2018-2022 is currently being evaluated by an external consultant.

9. The NSW Council for Women's Economic Opportunity (Council) aim to meet three times a year.
 - a) The Council met on the following dates in 2019/20 and 2020/21:
 - 17 May 2019
 - 26 August 2019
 - 4 December 2019
 - 22 June 2020
 - 1 December 2020
 - 4 February 2021
 - 31 March 2021
 - 9 August 2021
 - 30 November 2021.

Members also meet regularly in smaller working groups to advance priority projects.

- b) The Council provides specialist advice to the NSW Government to improve women's financial wellbeing and security, and support diverse and flexible employment

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opportunities for women and girls. In doing so, the Council contributes to the implementation of the NSW Women's Strategy and other areas of policy, program and project development. The Council is being consulted on the NSW Women's Economic Opportunities Review. This is documented in the Terms of Reference of the Review. A Council member is on the Women's Economic Opportunities Review Expert Panel.

Women's Economic Opportunities Review

10. What is the timeline to complete the Women's Economic Opportunities Review?
11. What does the NSW Government aim to do with the review's findings?
 - a) Will it be used to form a new strategy to drive economic reform for women in NSW?
 - b) Would a new strategy include the broader issues of health and wellbeing?
12. Are external consultants being used as part of the review?
 - a) If so, how much are they being paid?
13. How many of the review outcomes (as referenced in Scope item 7) does the Government expect to have responsibility for?
 - a) Given the majority of women employed in NSW are not employees of the NSW Government, how does the Government propose to address the gender pay gap?
 - b) Will the NSW Government commit to making changes as a result of the review to improve the conditions of early childhood educators (a work force made up primarily of women which has comparatively low pay rates)?

ANSWER

10. It is expected that the Women's Economic Opportunities Review will be completed by June 2022.
11. The Women's Economic Opportunities Review will inform NSW Government policy that improves economic outcomes for women in NSW, and it will inform the new NSW Women's Strategy. Health and wellbeing will remain priorities in the next NSW Women's Strategy.
12. This is a matter for the Treasurer.
13. The Women's Economic Opportunities Review outcomes are still being developed. The Review is giving particular consideration to reforms which support the best start in life for young children by improving the access to, participation in and quality of early childhood education.

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Housing

14. What proportion of applicants on the waiting list for public housing are:
 - a) Women?
 - b) Women over 50?
15. How many women over the age of 50 accessed emergency housing through the Links2Home program for the 2020-2021 financial year?
16. The 2016 Census shows that homelessness in NSW has increased at the fastest rate of any state, with homelessness among women increasing by 32%, and homelessness among women aged between 65 and 74 years increasing by 78%. Similarly, the NSW Homelessness Strategy states that between 2013-14 and 2016-17, NSW saw an 88% growth in the number of women over the age of 55 years accessing homelessness services. What is the NSW Government's approach to reducing the numbers of women facing homelessness?
17. Can the Minister advise how many frontline women's refuges there are across NSW as part of the Homelessness Services and the total funding to these services from the overall \$2.7 billion in the Stronger Communities cluster?
18. The NSW Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023 highlighted older women as a focus area for targeted housing options. What strategies have been put in place to lower the risk of homelessness in this high risk group?
19. Nine locations have been identified across Greater Sydney for boarding homes to be built for women at risk of homelessness. When will these nine locations have the facilities built and servicing the needs of women at risk of homelessness?
 - a) How will the effectiveness of this program in preventing homelessness in older women be measured?
 - b) Will this program be rolled out to other areas of need in NSW?
 - c) If so, when?
20. Rental affordability hits single income women hard. What is the NSW Government doing to address rental affordability, especially as it affects low income women, older women and girls?

ANSWER

14. This question is a matter for the Minister for Families and Communities and Minister for Disability Services.
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Health

21. Over the last 30 years, Women’s Health Centres’s core funding has remained between at \$250,000-\$600,000, reflecting no real increase in over 30 years. However, costs for Women’s Health Centres have increased significantly, including wages, IT infrastructure and accreditation requirements. Can the NSW Government explain why it hasn’t kept core funding for Women’s Health Centres, at a minimum, in line with CPI?

- a) Why hasn’t funding kept pace with overall funding of NSW Health?
- b) Will the NSW Government commit to a minimum increase in baseline funding of \$1 million per centre per annum, as is being requested in the sector?

22. Women’s Health NSW had to turn people away from its services in the last quarter due to lack of available counsellors and the level of demand. Will the Minister commit to supporting a level of funding that will allow every woman who needs it access to these vital services?

23. Women’s Health NSW is experiencing a surge in demand across its services. What is the NSW Government’s plan to ensure that the women and girls who require their services can access them for improved health outcomes?

24. Trauma-informed practice is an important factor in helping women who are recovering from sexual assault, domestic violence and other forms of abuse. What steps is the Minister taking to ensure all women who need it have access to trauma-informed care across NSW?

25. What additional funding and resources is the NSW Government committing to overcome the disparity in maternal health outcomes between metropolitan and rural /regional NSW?

26. Given the overwhelming evidence of severe disparities in access to reproductive health services between metropolitan and rural/regional NSW, can the NSW Government specify the funding in this budget to start to reverse this situation?

27. In light of the positive impacts of Birthing on Country programs on maternal health and wellbeing, reduction of preterm births and the health of infants, what additional support is the NSW Government giving to new Birthing on Country sites across NSW?

ANSWER

21 (a) – (b)

Historical data sets indicate that NSW Health has provided funding increases of more than 75 per cent to NGO Grant Program recipients over the last 30 years, reflecting an annual increase of approximately 2.5 per cent. It is understood that this exceeds National CPI rates for the same period (based on ABS data “All Groups” at June each year).

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This funding is in addition to Social and Community Services Equal Remuneration Order funding increases provided to eligible NGOs, noting that this arrangement has provided funding increases exceeding 15 per cent over the last decade to assist eligible NGOs to meet the costs of salary increases associated with the Order.

22 – 24.

In 2021-22, funding of \$12,179,300 is being allocated to women's health centres across NSW. This includes a three-year funding agreement with Women's Health NSW, as the peak body. Funding to centres is administered by the relevant local health district who also oversee the agreements with centres and continually work with them to monitor service demand and their capacity to respond to women's health and wellbeing needs.

NSW Health is committed to providing holistic and trauma informed care and delivers a wide range of trauma-informed and trauma-specific specialist Violence, Abuse and Neglect (VAN) services through the public health system.

VAN Services are NSW Health specialist services that provide dedicated trauma-informed and trauma-specific responses to domestic and family violence, sexual assault, all forms of child physical abuse and neglect and children and young people displaying problematic sexual behaviour or engaging in harmful sexual behaviour.

25. Safe and quality maternity care is being achieved through Tiered Perinatal Networks (TPNs) that work together to enable smaller facilities, such as those in rural and regional NSW, to quickly access specialist consultation. The TPNs facilitate referrals and safe transfer of pregnant women to nearby hospitals which offer higher level care.

In 2018, under the NSW Parent Package, \$157 million was invested over four years to deliver a range of initiatives to improve support to parents. This includes an annual spend of \$1.5 million on Maternal Transfers Redesign, which aims to improve safety and outcomes for women and their families in regional and rural NSW through the introduction of new systems and processes.

26. Funding of \$9.9 million is provided to Family Planning NSW for reproductive and sexual health services in NSW. Family Planning NSW has clinics in Sydney and regional NSW that offer contraception information, contraceptive procedures, pregnancy options including early abortion, STI testing and management, advice regarding management of menopause symptoms, and more.

NSW Health has also funded Family Planning NSW with \$1.2 million over three years to deliver the SEARCH Project (Service Equitable Access to Reproductive Health services in regional NSW) to pilot a new service model to improve access to community-based reproductive health services for women in regional NSW.

27. NSW Health is guided by the NSW Aboriginal Health Plan 2013-2023, developed in partnership with the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW. NSW has policies and services in place to ensure that Aboriginal families have a choice of high quality, safe maternity care that best suits the needs of their family. NSW Health is currently working with Waminda South Coast Women's Health and Welfare Aboriginal Corporation on their proposed Birthing on Country model of care.

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COVID-19 impacts

21. Has the NSW Government collected data around the specific impacts of COVID-19 on women in NSW?
22. Does the NSW Government have data on how many women accessed its COVID-19 recovery programs?

ANSWER

28. Yes.
29. Data on COVID-19 recovery programs are a matter for the relevant Minister.

Grants

30. How many one-off grants were accessed by women who were the victim-survivors of domestic and family violence living in DCJ-funded women's refuges as part of the second phase of the Return to Work program?
 - a) Can the Minister provide a breakdown of the postcodes in which the grants were allocated?
31. How many groups/organisations applied for the Investing in Women Funding Program between March 31 and April 30, 2021?
 - a) Can the Minister provide a breakdown of the postcodes in which groups operate that were allocated funding in 2021?

ANSWER

30. I am advised as at 28 March 2022:

The second phase of the Return to Work Program is currently open. More than 250 women engaged with domestic and family violence refuges have expressed interest in the program. Allocation of funding per postcode is not available.

31. 177 applications were received. Information is here: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/investing-women-funding-program>

Community Mental Health support and services

32. How much does each LHD spend on community mental health services?
33. What planning work have each of the LHD's done to identify additional support models that they need for their local communities?

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ANSWER

I refer the member to the response provided at Portfolio Committee No. 2 - Mental Health – Budget Estimates Hearing – 5 November 2021 – supplementary questions 73 - 74.

Counselling appointments held via Telehealth

34. In relation to online or telehealth services for appointments related to mental health can you please advise how many of these were held in 2021?

35. For each of the LHD's, how many online or telehealth appointments for mental health were held in 2021?

36. In rural hospitals Emergency Departments where they rely on mental health services to be conducted via Telehealth, what was the average wait time in 2021 for someone presenting suicidal to be connected with a specialised trained health worker?

ANSWER

34. NSW Health does not capture the number of appointments in regular reporting on telehealth. Clinical hours are a better measure of the amount of care received.

In 2021, NSW public specialist community mental health services provided 592,117 hours of care by phone or telehealth.

35. In 2021, the total number of hours in each LHD that provided mental health services via phone or telehealth is shown below:

Local Health District	Phone and telehealth hours
Central Coast	19,001.7
Far West	4,145.0
Hunter New England	69,253.0
Illawarra Shoalhaven	28,896.7
Mid North Coast	15,922.6
Murrumbidgee	19,474.3
Nepean Blue Mountains	29,319.8
Northern NSW	29,721.7
Northern Sydney	51,632.7
South Eastern Sydney	70,609.7
South West Sydney	49,850.6
Southern NSW	9,306.1
Sydney	63,840.1
Western NSW	29,433.8

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Western Sydney	88,124.9
NSW TOTAL LHDs	592,117.0

36. NSW Health does not hold this data.

Men's Mental Health

37. How many people have been supported in the HealthWISE suicide prevention initiative in the Hunter New England Local Health District?

38. How many people have been supported in the Next Steps suicide attempt response team in the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District?

ANSWER

37. From 1 July 2021 to 28 February 2022, HealthWISE has supported 198 people in the New England North West region of the Hunter New England Local Health District. This initiative is funded by the NSW Suicide Prevention Fund from 2020-2024.

38. From 1 July 2021 to 17 March 2022, 129 people have been supported by the program. This initiative is funded by the NSW Suicide Prevention Fund from 2020-2024, with funding support also provided by the Southern NSW Primary Health Network.

Mental Health patients waiting in Emergency Departments

39. In 2021, how many patients seeking admission for psychiatric treatment have waited more than 24 hours in the emergency department because a psychiatry unit bed was not available?

40. Can you please provide a list of the hospitals this happened in?

ANSWER

39 – 40

NSW Health does not record this data. Extended Emergency Department (ED) stays may occur for many reasons other than the availability of a psychiatry unit bed. Other causes for long ED stays may include the need to address other comorbidities, for further medical treatment or detoxification, the completion of complex assessments or care plans, or the need to await transport to an available bed at another facility.

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Step up step down program

41. Will the NSW Government will establish a state wide Step-up Step-down program, similar to The Buduwa Step-Up Step-Down Service across NSW?

42. Are there investigations underway for this to be expanded to any other LHDs in the near future?

43. If so, where?

ANSWER

41. – 43.

The NSW Government regularly considers new opportunities to enhance and expand mental health support, include community mental health.

Post-natal depression

44. When will the two new mother and baby mental health wards at Royal Prince Alfred and Westmead hospitals open?

ANSWER

44. The Mother and Baby Unit at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital is expected to commence operations in May 2022. The Mother and Baby Unit at Westmead Hospital is expected to commence operations in early 2023.

\$130 million to fast track mental health recovery

45. How much of the \$20 million committed to provide 55,000 additional services to young people through local headspace centres been allocated?

46. Do you know how many additional services have actually been delivered?

47. Is the Multicultural Mental Health Line up and running?

ANSWER

45. To date, \$5 million has been paid to Headspace National for completion of the first two activity milestones as part of the \$20 million allocated to Headspace National over two years (2021-22 to 2022-23). The \$20 million will support three interlinked packages of support to be rolled out between January 2022 and June 2023 including:

(a) Student placement program

(b) GP capacity boost

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(c) Introducing sessional psychiatrists into NSW Headspace centres

46. Additional services will be underway by April 2022.

47. Funding has been provided to Western Sydney Local Health District and recruitment is underway for the Transcultural Mental Health Line. It is anticipated that the Transcultural Mental Health Line will be fully operational by May 2022.

\$1.5 million to enhance youth mental health services

48. Has the Moderated Online Social Therapy (MOST) designed by youth mental health organisation Orygen, been completely rolled out?

49. How many youth mental health services now have this program?

50. Where are these services located?

ANSWER

48 – 50.

Orygen aims for the MOST roll out to be finalised by the end of June 2022.

The following local health districts will be implementing the MOST platform:

- Central Coast
- South Eastern Sydney
- Western NSW
- Northern Sydney
- South Western Sydney
- Murrumbidgee
- Nepean Blue Mountains.

Selected headspace services implementing the MOST platform include:

- Bondi Junction
- Gosford
- Lake Haven
- Wyong.

Bringing mental health support closer to home

51. How many calming non clinical hubs called Safe Havens are in place?

52. How many Suicide Prevention Outreach Teams (SPOTs) are in place across NSW?

53. Where are these teams located?

ANSWER

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51. There are 16 Safe Havens operational across NSW as at 14 March 2022.

52. There are 16 Suicide Prevention Outreach Teams (SPOTs) operational across NSW as at 14 March 2022.

53. Safe Haven locations are available at:

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/towardszerosuicides/Pages/safe-haven.aspx>

SPOT locations are available at:

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/towardszerosuicides/Pages/suicide-prevention-outreach-teams.aspx>

Lockdown lifeline-mental health support package

54. How much of the \$3 million allocated to CALD communities for mental health services has been allocated?

55. What community organisations have been funded?

ANSWER

54 - 55.

The Commonwealth Government is responsible for the allocation of this funding.

Cost of locums

56. What is the average cost per day for Locums visiting rural NSW?

57. What is the highest rate that is currently paid for Locums visiting NSW per day?

58. What other costs are covered for Locums when they visit rural NSW? (ie accommodation, food, incidentals)

59. What is the benefit to the community to have locums rather than permanent doctors?

60. Have you had any discussions about capping the Locum rates?

ANSWER

I refer the member to the response provided at Portfolio Committee No. 2 – Health – Budget Estimates Hearing – 27 August 2021 – supplementary questions 101 – 106.

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