

INTRODUCTION

Thank you

On behalf of Minister Rattenbury, who is unable to be here today, I would like to start with an opening statement this morning. I thank the Committee for the opportunity.

MENTAL HEALTH

The ACT Government recognises the seriousness of mental illness in our community and the need to provide coordinated and accessible services to people who need help.

While the ACT Government has a strong record of investment in the provision of mental health services and already delivers and funds a range of initiatives to address the mental health needs of Canberrans, I am pleased to say that as part of the government's priorities and key items that form part of the Parliamentary Agreement, we are further strengthening the delivering and coordination of mental health services for those in our community who need them the most.

This is demonstrated by the more than \$23.8 million in new mental health initiatives contained in this year's Budget, which builds on the record investments we have made in this space over recent years.

Part of this includes the \$2.9 million over four years for the establishment of the new Office for Mental Health, with work to progress the establishment of the new Office underway.

As has been outlined by Minister Rattenbury previously, the Office of Mental Health will be empowered to provide reports and advice to the community and government on what is working and what is not working in the delivery of mental health services, and to have a hands-on role in commissioning and monitoring the delivery of programs.

The new Office will also have a role in coordinating the range of existing support services provided by both the government and the community sector and ensure that nobody is falling through the gaps.

As part of this year's Budget there is also a focus on providing better youth mental health programs with \$3 million in new investment.

We know that working with young people and their families at the earliest possible opportunity can make a significant difference to their lifelong mental health. This means working with children and young people not only at the early signs of concern, but in the early stages of their lives, to support their mental health and wellbeing.

I am pleased to say that this Budget, in line with parliamentary agreement items and labor election commitments, will fund the expansion of counselling services for children, improve hospital-based services for young people and provide more support to community providers to deliver early intervention programs.

We are funding the expansion of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Consultation Liaison Service within the Canberra Hospital to operate seven days per week.

The CAMHS Consultation Liaison Service provides assessment and referrals to appropriate mental health services. CAMHS clinicians also work closely with families and carers to provide information and advice to support adolescents admitted to hospital.

This expansion means these important services will now be available to young people, their families and carers on weekends as well.

We are also expanding the CAMHS Primary School Intervention Program, providing enhancing case management and coordination of support services to more primary school children aged 5 to 12 years.

This expansion will provide for counselling services to more primary school aged children who are showing early signs of common mental health concerns, such as depression, anxiety and body image issues.

In addition, through the Budget we are funding the *headspace* program to provide mental health services to young people aged between 18 and 25 years who are experiencing a mild to moderate mental health condition.

This aligns the ACT with the work underway by the National Youth Mental Health Foundation to deliver better mental health services to young people.

Mr Chairman, it is also a Government priority to address the important challenge of suicide prevention wherever possible.

As Minister Rattenbury recently outlined in a ministerial statement to the Assembly, there is no single answer to combating suicide, but each step forward in improving services; each conversation had with someone in distress is a step closer to potentially saving a life.

That's why, through the 2017 Budget we are also investing more in reducing the incidence of suicide in our community by working with partners. These include the Black Dog Institute and the Way Back program.

Mr Chairman, these youth-focussed and suicide prevention initiatives are part of a range of other targeted mental health services being funded as part of this year's Budget.

JUSTICE HEALTH

Mr Chairman, another key area of service delivery is providing health care services to those who are in our justice system.

A key area of focus for the Justice Health Service this year, since the Moss Inquiry was released, has been the implementation of the recommendations of the Inquiry. Senior ACT Health staff are working collaboratively across government to implement the recommendations and make the improvements to detainee care that the Government agreed to in February this year.

The Government has clearly stated it can and must do more to ensure people in custody are safe and receive appropriate care. We are committed to the continued implementation of this work.

The Justice Health Service is continuing to care for people requiring some of the most complex mental health care in the ACT. This unit has been a key addition to the mental health service system in the ACT. Over time we all look forward to seeing the improvements to the mental health of the people admitted to this state of the art unit.

CONCLUSION

A significant proportion of our community will experience or know someone who will experience mental illness at some time throughout their lives. It is important to recognise that we all play a role in reducing stigma around mental illness by encouraging those around us to seek help when they need it.

The ACT Government recognises the impact mental illness can have on people in our community, which is why we created a dedicated ministerial portfolio for Mental Health, and are in the process of establishing an Office of Mental Health and developing new strategies for suicide reduction.

With that I am very happy to take questions from the Committee.

ENDS