



Mental Health Commission
of New South Wales

The Hon. R. Borsak
Chair, Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Legal Affairs
Parliament of New South Wales
6 Macquarie Street, Sydney NSW 2000

By email: PortfolioCommittee4@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Chair

Inquiry into Emergency Services Agencies

I refer to my recent appearance at the Committee's Inquiry into Emergency Services Agencies in New South Wales, and specifically to the questions taken on notice, from the Hon. Catherine Cusack.

Please find attached my responses to the questions.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact Ms Julie Zieth, Executive Officer, on _____ or at _____.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Lourey
NSW Mental Health Commissioner

13 April 2018



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“(Obviously we are really keen to understand what our leaders in the public sector are doing to address this. I want to ask you about the mental health and wellbeing strategy for first responders. Were you the commissioner when that was released?) Do you know how much it cost to put together that strategy?”

The development of the intellectual content of the strategy was led by Professor Samuel Harvey from the University of NSW and the Black Dog Institute. There were no incremental costs for this work, which was conducted by Professor Harvey within Ministry of Health grant funding of UNSW’s Workplace Mental Health Research Program: <http://www.wmh.unsw.edu.au/>

The Mental Health Commission of NSW’s costs in developing the strategy were \$7761.22, composed of design, printing and launch costs.

In addition, \$23,000 was granted by iCare to the Commission to fund the production of videos to support agency and community engagement with the strategy.



“(As you said, it is very high level. Has any implementation occurred and are you satisfied with the progress that they are making, because it does not look good to us?) No, my question is around implementation. Since it was the Mental Health Commission that prepared this report and you are seen as the champion and the advocate for mental health, I am trying to understand how satisfactory their progress is and what the problems are. Can you help our Committee to understand that so that we can come up with a report that has some cracking good recommendations inspired by your evidence?”

The Commission does not have a direct role in implementation or oversight of the strategy, which was developed by the Commission at the request of the Department of Premier and Cabinet and launched by the Minister for Mental Health on behalf of Minister for Emergency Services, the Minister for Health and the NSW Government.

The Commission undertook to reconvene the emergency services leadership group which consulted on the strategy, in order to continue their sharing of knowledge, consistent with the Mental Health Commission Act. The group met most recently in July 2017, and participants have been invited to another meeting in May 2018, at which it is proposed to discuss experiences to date with implementation and any issues that have emerged.

At an operational level, officers from the first responder agencies convene quarterly to discuss their progress in implementing the strategy. This group is facilitated by iCare.

The Commission would re-iterate the intent expressed in the *Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for first Responder Organisations in NSW* that “The Strategic objectives set out in this document will only be met via a coordinated effort by all stakeholders, including first responder organisations, policy makers, health professionals, insurance and rehabilitation organisation, unions and first responders themselves.” We submit that this will take significant leadership and resources to facilitate the cultural change required, and the monitoring, review and renewal of that commitment.