



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEES

## **BUDGET ESTIMATES 2019-2020 Supplementary Questions**

**Portfolio Committee No. 2 – Health**

**MENTAL HEALTH, REGIONAL YOUTH AND WOMEN**

Hearing: Thursday 5 March 2020

**Answers due by: Wednesday, 1 April 2020**

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# MENTAL HEALTH, REGIONAL YOUTH AND WOMEN

## Questions from Ms Abigail Boyd MLC

### NSW Women's Strategy Year Two Action Plan Report - Year One Final Report

1. According to the 2016 Census data, there are over 4.5 million people in NSW that fall into the category of women and children.<sup>1</sup>

Why then is the target for provision of targeted mental health supports for women and children set at 'more than 900' per year,<sup>2</sup> or 0.02% of this population, when 20% of Australians experience mental illness in any given year?<sup>3</sup>

### ANSWER

I am advised the NSW Women's Strategy 2018-2022 cited above relates to the mental health needs of mothers and children. The target under this action is to provide more than 900 women and their children with access to targeted mental health supports in 2018-2019.

NSW Health provides a range of mental health services that are available to all NSW residents, including mothers and children. Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Services (PIMHS) are specialist services that deliver interventions for the treatment of complex mental health problems in perinatal patients.

Since 2016-17, under the NSW Mental Health Reform, 19 new PIMHS positions are recurrently funded across NSW.

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016, Census of Population and Housing General Community Profile, 'Table G04 Age by Sex', cat. number 2001.0,

[[https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census\\_services/getproduct/census/2016/communityprofile/036?opendocument](https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/communityprofile/036?opendocument)]. Note data was obtained through addition of data (total females in state) + (total males in state aged 0-17)

<sup>2</sup> Women NSW, Year One Final Report: 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019, in *NSW Women's Strategy 2018-2020 Year Two Action Plan: To 30 June 2020*, 2019, p 8, [[https://www.women.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/673867/192415-NSW-Womens-Strategy-2018-22-Year-2-Action-Plan\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.women.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/673867/192415-NSW-Womens-Strategy-2018-22-Year-2-Action-Plan_WEB.pdf)]

<sup>3</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009, National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing: Summary of Results, 4326.0, 2007, via Black Dog Institute *Facts & Figures about mental health* [[https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/docs/default-source/factsheets/facts\\_figures.pdf?sfvrsn=8](https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/docs/default-source/factsheets/facts_figures.pdf?sfvrsn=8)]

2. The NSW Women's Strategy required every local health district and specialty network in NSW to develop a local plan to address the prevalence of eating disorders,<sup>4</sup> which are estimated by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare to affect as much as 16% of the population.<sup>5</sup>

What additional funding has been allocated to local health districts to action their local plans?

#### **ANSWER**

The NSW Government's investment in eating disorders treatment has increased from \$5.4 million in 2018-19, to \$7.7 million per annum in 2019-20; an increase of nearly \$2.4 million

3. The NSW Women's Strategy identifies the need to respond to the homelessness crisis affecting older women, with point 2.5 of the Year One Final Report stating you've completed the target to "encourage" new housing proposals through the Social and Affordable Housing Fund that target older women.<sup>6</sup>

Census data republished in the Sydney Morning Herald in February shows that 'the number of women aged 65 to 74 describing themselves as homeless increased by 51 per cent in the five years to 2016' (Sharon Bradley, 8 Feb 2020, 'Having to ask for somewhere to live is difficult indeed', Sydney Morning Herald).

When asked about this during Further Hearings, you stated this was 'on the radar'. What concrete achievements in policy or funding have been made to address this?

#### **ANSWER**

Increase the number of social and affordable dwellings in NSW. Nine contracts have been awarded to registered community housing providers through two tenders to deliver access to over 3,400 new social and affordable homes. All homes are expected to be delivered by the end of 2022.

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<sup>4</sup> Women NSW, Year One Final Report: 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019, in *NSW Women's Strategy 2018-2020 Year Two Action Plan: To 30 June 2020*, 2019, p 8, [[https://www.women.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/673867/192415-NSW-Womens-Strategy-2018-22\\_Year-2-Action-Plan\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.women.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/673867/192415-NSW-Womens-Strategy-2018-22_Year-2-Action-Plan_WEB.pdf)].

<sup>5</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Australia's health 2018: 3.13 Eating disorders*, p 1 [<https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/ab86db9d-410a-4c93-89c4-99c8bdbdf125/aihw-aus-221-chapter-3-13.pdf.aspx>]

<sup>6</sup> Women NSW, Year One Final Report: 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019, in *NSW Women's Strategy 2018-2020 Year Two Action Plan: To 30 June 2020*, 2019, p 8, [[https://www.women.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/673867/192415-NSW-Womens-Strategy-2018-22\\_Year-2-Action-Plan\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.women.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/673867/192415-NSW-Womens-Strategy-2018-22_Year-2-Action-Plan_WEB.pdf)]

Through the SAHF initiative a total of 1,414 homes are targeted to tenants aged 55 years and over with 232 dwellings contracted through the SAHF 2 tender targeted specifically for older women. Tenant data (December 2019) indicates that of 530 SAHF residents who are aged 55 years and over, 314 are women.

Close to 900 homes are now complete and tenanted with more than 1,700 under construction. Through the SAHF, tenants receive a package that includes a quality home coupled with access to supports tailored to their individual needs such as training, employment opportunities and health services.

4. Victoria has recently passed the Gender Equality Bill 2019, with the Gender Equality Act 2020 coming into effect March 2021.<sup>7</sup> The Act ‘aims to improve workplace gender equality across the Victorian public sector, universities and local councils’,<sup>8</sup> and establishes the Public Sector Gender Equality Commissioner.

The aims of this Act are significantly similar to objectives included in the NSW of the NSW Women's Strategy. However, in Further Hearings, you stated there were no plans to bring in a similar Bill to enshrine in legislation these goals that NSW shares. Why is there no need for legislation of this kind in NSW?

## **ANSWER**

I am advised the NSW Government is undertaking research and scoping work around the benefits and disadvantages of a legislative approach to gender equality.

## **Ministry of Women**

5. I note that while you are the Minister for Mental Health, Regional Youth and Women, you do not have administration over any Acts specifically related to women, or issues that disproportionately affect women.

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<sup>7</sup> State Government of Victoria, *Gender Equality Act 2020*, 27 February 2020 [<https://www.vic.gov.au/gender-equality-bill>]

<sup>8</sup> State Government of Victoria, *Gender Equality Act 2020*, 27 February 2020, para 1 [<https://www.vic.gov.au/gender-equality-bill>]

What purpose do you see your role as Minister for Women being, given that you have no legislative oversight? What concrete achievements have you made in the role, excluding community liaison?

## ANSWER

The Minister for Women's role is to advocate for the improvement of economic, social and physical wellbeing of women and girls across NSW, representing women's groups and stakeholder interests to other Ministers.

This involves:

- driving the NSW Women's Strategy 2018-2022 and annual action plans. An Interdepartmental Committee guides and supports implementation, monitoring and reporting of action plans and plays a critical role in identifying initiatives and required resources for inclusion in future action plans. I released the Year Two Action Plan in August 2019.
- oversight of the Women in NSW Reports which examine issues of gender equity and suggest policy solutions in different interest areas. In February 2020 we released *Getting down to Business: a profile of women in small business in NSW*. The *Getting down to Business* report provides an overview of the current status of female business ownership in NSW and considers the challenges and opportunities for women in business. The report aims to encourage informed decision-making, research and discussion among public policy makers and the broader business community.
- oversight of the Investing in Women Grants program and NSW Women's Week grant program and associated activities.
- advocating for women and girls at the cabinet table, regularly speaking with my colleagues about the issues that are affecting women. I also use my role to represent women's groups and stakeholder interests to other Ministers.
- advocating for female leadership, leading a whole-of-community approach to ensure women hold leadership roles.
- consult with the Council for Women's Economic Opportunity (CWEO) for specialist advice on enhancing women's economic opportunities and financial security.

Some examples of recent achievements made include:

**1. Everything for Women – Financial Information Tool.**

In partnership with CWEO, Women NSW jointly developed a web-based resource to promote existing financial literacy resources to women. This tool provides easy access to resources, taking users directly to reliable information that will help them with their financial literacy and wellbeing. The Tool is available via the Women NSW website.

**2. Investing in Women Grants**

Women NSW provides \$400,000 for the Investing in Women funding program.

The Investing in Women funding program funds NSW organisations to develop and implement projects that are in line with the three focus areas of the NSW Women’s Strategy. The grant guidelines set out the grant objectives and priority areas, as well as targeted priority groups (including women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, women from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, women with disability, young women, older women and LGBTIQ women).

**3. NSW Women’s Week Grants**

The NSW Women’s Week grants provide local organisations with an opportunity to give back by delivering education, mentoring and participation activities that benefit local women and girls.

The NSW Women’s Week Grant-funded events and activities support accessibility to a diversity of people including women and young girls in rural and remote communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or queer (LGBTIQ) people and people with disability. This year, we announced 23 successful recipients. For detail of NSW Women’s Week grant recipients please visit <https://www.women.nsw.gov.au/news-and-events/nsw-womens-week/nsw-womens-week-grants/nsw-womens-week-grant-recipients>

**4. NSW Women’s Week 2020**

Through a series of events and activities, NSW Women’s Week celebrates the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women, and promotes gender equality. In 2020 the theme was #EachforEqual. The NSW Women’s Week coincided with International Women’s Day, and the NSW Women of the Year Awards. For details of NSW Women’s Week events supported by Women NSW please visit <https://www.women.nsw.gov.au/news-and-events/nsw-womens-week>.

#### **5. NSW Women of the Year Awards**

I most recently hosted the NSW Women of the Year Awards, which is one of the ways we recognise and celebrate the outstanding contribution made by women across NSW to industry, communities and society. The Awards have two levels – Local Woman of the Year Award and the State wide awards. The Awards recognise women who are role models for future generations from both the public and private sector. This is particularly important for women and girls from vulnerable communities – to show them what is possible.

#### **Everything for Women Financial Information Tool**

6. During the development of the Everything for Women Financial Information Tool, what feedback was sought on the tool from frontline domestic violence services and advocacy organisations, legal services such as the Financial Rights Community Legal Centre, and the women’s advocacy sector?

#### **ANSWER**

I am advised during the development of the Everything for Women – Financial Information Tool members of the Council for Women’s Opportunity (CWEO) and Women NSW consulted a wide range of government, non-government and corporate organisations. The consultation targeted organisations with expertise in providing financial literacy, capability and wellbeing information. This information is presented in the Financial Information Tool to facilitate easier access to information considered vital to women in a range of situations, including women experiencing domestic and family violence. Some of the organisations consulted included the Financial and Legal Rights Counselling Service, Financial Counselling Australia, Financial Counselling Association NSW, Thriving Communities Partnerships, and Legal Aid.

7. During the development of the tool, what feedback was sought from women with lived experience of financial abuse, coercive control, living below the poverty line, and/or insecure income?

#### **ANSWER**

I am advised the links on the Financial Information Tool are from trusted sources, such as the Australian Securities and Investment Commission, the NSW Department of Customer Service and Customer Service Commission, Fair Trading NSW, the Financial and Legal Rights Counselling Service and the National Debt Helpline, all of which draw upon client research and feedback. Consultation with Thriving Communities Partnership (a cross-sector collaboration focusing on fair

access to essential services), the Commonwealth Bank and the Australian Banking Association provided additional insights into the needs of women with lived experience of financial issues arising in situations of domestic and family violence. Women NSW also has expertise in issues regarding domestic and family violence gained through its policy development, funding programs, evaluation work and carriage of strategies such as the Sexual Assault Strategy 2018-2021, the Domestic and Family Violence Blueprint for Reform 2016-2021, where extensive consultation has occurred, and the NSW contribution to the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, 2010 – 2022. Direct feedback from women with lived experience of financial abuse, coercive control, living below the poverty line, and/or insecure income was not sought directly for this iteration.

Women NSW are currently in planning stages to improve the Financial Toolkit and as part of this process additional feedback may be sought from various groups.

8. Please provide details on any trials of the tool conducted, especially in vulnerable communities.

**ANSWER**

The Financial Information Tool is a beta release and Women NSW is monitoring feedback through both direct feedback from users lodged via the website and from the stakeholders consulted during the development phase. The Council for Women’s Opportunity (CWEO) members will also provide feedback from their networks. The Financial Information Tool complies with general accessibility requirements for all government websites. Women NSW are currently in planning stages to further enhance the Financial Toolkit and as part of this process feedback will be sought from various groups, including vulnerable women.

**Mental Health Hotline**

9. What percentage of calls to the general Mental Health Hotline are from women?

**ANSWER**

The NSW Ministry of Health does not monitor the percentage of calls from women, to the NSW Mental Health Line.



10. Are referrals to services from the Mental Health Hotline tracked? If not, why not?

**ANSWER**

Local Health District Mental Health Services have processes in place to ensure people who have been referred to the service are followed up.

**Questions from the Hon Mark Buttigieg MLC (on behalf of the NSW Labor Opposition)**

**Shellharbour Hospital Mental Health Services, Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District (ISLHD)**

11. Is the Minister aware there are no psychology services available at Shellharbour Hospital to support the 26 mental health beds in the Eloura High Care Area and the Eloura Acute Admission Area at any time?
12. Why doesn't Shellharbour Hospital have a full time psychiatrist on staff to service its specialist mental health units?
13. Did the ISLHD close 5 beds in the Eloura Acute Admission Area and 2 beds in the Mirrabrook Mental Health Unit in 2019, due to staffing shortages?
14. When will these 7 beds be reinstated?
15. Why is there a shortage of mental health nursing staffing in the ISLHD?
16. How many fulltime equivalent mental health nursing staff vacancies currently exist across the ISLHD? When will these be filled?
17. How many of these vacancies are at Shellharbour Hospital specialist mental health units?
18. Does the ISLHD utilise beds in the surgical units at Shellharbour Hospital to accommodate mental health patients? Did this occur on 11 December 2019? How many other times has this happened?
19. Do all staff in the surgical unit at Shellharbour Hospital have mental health nursing training and violence prevention and management training?
20. Do mental health patients receive appropriate specialist care while accommodated in the surgical unit?
21. What steps is the ISLHD taking to ensure the safety of staff and patients (surgical and mental health) when the surgical unit is used to accommodate mental health patients?

## **ANSWERS**

(11) – (21)

Psychological services are available at the Shellharbour Hospital Mental Health Service. They support consumers in the Eloura High Care and Acute Admission units. There are also psychiatrists supported by registrars on all the acute mental health units at Shellharbour Hospital and they provide full time coverage.

In 2019, mental health beds were closed due to nurse staffing levels which continue to be affected by unplanned leave, as well as vacancies in specialist nursing positions. The Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District has mechanisms in place to identify vacancies and recruit to positions in accordance with service delivery needs and models of care. The Mental Health Service has completed extensive recruitment, including through the Transition to Professional Practice Registered Nurses program.

Of the seven beds that were closed in 2019, one re-opened on 11 November 2019 and another on 25 November 2019. As at 18 March 2020, five beds remain closed and the District is working on gradually re-opening them as soon as possible.

When mental health consumers need admission for a medical condition or surgery, they are accommodated in the most appropriate ward for their care. Mental health staff support the ward staff to safely manage any mental health needs. If a mental health consumer requires medical or surgical care, the mental health team undertakes a risk assessment and supports the medical and surgical teams to provide care to the consumers, addressing both physical and mental health needs. There are also provisions for additional staff or services such as security or a 24/7 psychiatry consultation liaison.

A vast majority of mental health consumers are not violent or at high risk of aggression toward others, and not all staff at Shellharbour Hospital are required to have violence prevention management training. However, all registered nursing staff have basic mental health training as part of their undergraduate education.

### **Street Beat Program, Miyay Birray Youth Service, Moree**

22. Is the Minister for Regional Youth aware of the Street Beat Program run by the Miyay Birray Youth Service in Moree?

## **ANSWER**

Yes

23. Is the Minister for Regional Youth aware that funding for the Street Beat Program run by the Miyay Birray Youth Service in Moree has discontinued?

**ANSWER**

Yes

24. Has the Minister received any representations about the Street Beat Program or about the decision not to refund the program?

**ANSWER**

No

25. What is the Minister for Regional Youth doing to help reinstate this important program for regional youth in Moree?

**ANSWER**

The Office of Regional Youth reached out to Miyay Birray and confirmed that the funding the service receives from the Department of Communities and Justice in 2019 was for one year with a requirement to reapply. However, the CEO advised he was not made aware of this requirement which is why the application was not progressed. The CEO has since made representations to the local member, the Hon. Adam Marshall MP who has escalated the matter to the Attorney General and Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services.

## MENTAL HEALTH

### Questions from the Hon Greg Donnelly MLC

26. What are the procedures/protocols/guidelines/clinical practices used by The Sydney Children's Hospital Network Gender Clinic to determine whether or not a child or adolescent experiencing gender dysphoria should progress onto stage 1 puberty blocker treatment?
  - (a) Where did the procedures/protocols/guidelines/clinical practices come from?
  - (b) Regarding the procedures/protocols/guidelines/clinical practices, what Commonwealth department, authority or agency has examined them and authorised, approved or endorsed their use for treating children and adolescents experiencing gender dysphoria?
27. What are the procedures/protocols/guidelines/clinical practices used by The Sydney Children's Hospital Network Gender Clinic to determine whether or not a child or adolescent experiencing gender dysphoria should progress onto stage 2 gender affirming (cross-sex) hormone treatment?
  - (a) Where did the procedures/protocols/guidelines/clinical practices come from?
  - (b) Regarding the procedures/protocols/guidelines/clinical practices, what Commonwealth department, authority or agency has examined them and authorised, approved or endorsed their use for treating children and adolescents experiencing gender dysphoria?
28. Once a child or adolescent has completed stage 1 puberty blocker treatment for gender dysphoria at The Sydney Children's Hospital Network Gender Clinic, what ongoing follow-up procedures are in place to monitor the impact of the treatment on the individual?
29. Once a child or adolescent has completed stage 2 gender affirming (cross-sex) hormone treatment for gender dysphoria at The Sydney Children's Hospital Network Gender Clinic, what ongoing follow-up procedures are in place to monitor the impact of the treatment on the individual?
30. Does The Sydney Children's Hospital Network Gender Clinic record and maintain data regarding children and adolescents experiencing gender dysphoria, who have go through stage 1 and stage 2 treatment and then proceed onto stage 3 treatment surgery?
31. Regarding stage 1 puberty blocker treatment for children and adolescents experiencing gender dysphoria, is the treatment reversible?
  - (a) If the answer to the question above is yes, please provide the details of the mental health/medical/scientific evidence to support the answer i.e. references to peer reviewed mental health/medical/scientific journals and books?

32. Regarding stage 2 gender affirming (cross-sex) hormone treatment for children and adolescents experiencing gender dysphoria, is the treatment reversible?
- (a) If the answer to the question above is yes, please provide the details of the mental health/medical/scientific evidence to support the answer i.e. references to peer reviewed mental health/medical/scientific journals and books?

**ANSWERS**

(26) – (32)

These matters should be referred to the Minister for Health and Medical Research.