

Question on Notice

No. 513

Asked on 3 April 2019

MR S O'CONNOR ASKED MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS (HON G GRACE)

QUESTION:

With reference to recent Mission Australia data showing almost a quarter of 15 to 19 year olds are experiencing significant mental health issues—

Will the Minister advise what support and training is currently being offered to our state school students and teachers to proactively address this rising trend?

ANSWER:

Supporting the mental health and wellbeing of all Queensland state school students is of paramount importance to the Palaszczuk Government.

The Department of Education's *Student Learning and Wellbeing Framework* assists schools to develop and implement a whole-school approach to support the wellbeing and mental health of students. The Framework emphasises the importance of explicitly teaching and modelling social and emotional skills to support student wellbeing, as well as providing learning opportunities for students through curriculum focused on mental health. The Framework supports schools to intervene early when students show signs of, or are at risk of, mental health difficulties and promotes referral pathways for students who are in need of more intensive support.

The *Supporting Students' Mental Health and Wellbeing* procedure outlines the specific roles and responsibilities of key staff in promoting mental health and wellbeing, intervening early, and providing specialised intervention and case management for students with mental health difficulties.

To ensure that individual support is available for students in a school context, all Queensland state schools receive an allocation of Guidance Officer time. Guidance officers have the expertise to provide targeted assistance to students with mental health concerns, including counselling services and working directly with the student, their family, relevant school staff and external support providers.

Since 2016, all guidance officers have received suicide prevention and postvention training to ensure they can recognise and identify students at risk of complex mental health issues and suicide, and take immediate and appropriate steps to ensure that this risk is minimised. The training also ensures that an evidence-based best practice approach is taken when responding to suicide, supporting the mental health and wellbeing of students who have been impacted.

The department has eight Mental Health Coaches (MHCs) across Queensland. The MHCs are the key point of contact to provide support and advice to principals, school leaders and regional staff about student mental health and wellbeing. The MHCs can also provide advice and support to schools about the best training or programs to be implemented in the school environment that meet the mental health and wellbeing needs of the school community.

Funded by Queensland Health, Queensland state schools also work with Ed-LinQ coordinators to enhance partnerships and referral pathways between school communities, primary health providers and child and youth mental health services.

A key focus area of the Ed-LinQ initiative is to enhance capability of schools through increasing the knowledge and skills of guidance officers, teachers and school leadership teams to identify cases of emerging mental illness in children and young people.

The department is committed to developing and implementing a statewide continuum of educational delivery to ensure that students with severe and complex mental health conditions receive specialised and appropriate educational support at all stages of their illness.

The department currently provides education programs for students with severe and complex mental health conditions through a number of hospital and health settings across Queensland. The department is working with Queensland Health to deliver three new adolescent mental health facilities by 2020, which will have integrated education programs.

Queensland state schools are required to provide health and wellbeing education either as part of the delivery of the Australian Curriculum or as part of the school's pastoral care program.

By the end of 2020, schools are required to implement the Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education (AC:HPE). The AC:HPE includes a focus on mental health and wellbeing and how this can be enhanced and strengthened at an individual and community level. The content supports students to develop knowledge, understanding and skills to manage their own mental health and wellbeing and to support that of others.

The department has developed Curriculum into the Classroom (C2C) Health and Physical Education resources to support implementation of the AC:HPE. These resources include units specifically related to mental health and wellbeing in ways that are age appropriate, particularly for junior secondary.

The department also developed the Prep to Year 12 *Respectful relationships education program*—its primary prevention program available to all state schools that seeks to remove the causes of violence and prevent risk factors by using a strengths-based approach to build a culture of respect and gender equality. In this program students examine mental health and mental illness, and consider the impact on themselves and others.