

Question on Notice

No. 854

Asked on 16 June 2023

MR J LANGBROEK ASKED MINISTER FOR HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH AND AMBULANCE SERVICES AND MINISTER FOR WOMEN (HON S FENTIMAN)—

QUESTION

With reference to the closing the gap target of reducing the rate of suicide in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples which is currently not on track—

Will the Minister outline the strategies and KPIs that are currently in place to close this gap?

ANSWER

Every life: The Queensland Suicide Prevention Plan 2019-2029 sets out an over-arching strategic framework for whole-of-government and whole-of-community suicide prevention efforts. Every life advances a strengths-based approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing, drawing on the Tracks to Treaty agenda, that includes celebrating culture, supporting self-determination and reducing negative discourse towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Every life contains a number of actions that place Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities at the centre of decision-making across all aspects of mental health and suicide prevention. These actions are underpinned by the Local Thriving Communities reform, and local leaders and decision-making bodies play an integral role in implementing initiatives that support strong social and emotional wellbeing.

For example, the innovative First Nations-led and designed mental health and suicide prevention initiative Sit, Talk and Yarn (STaY), implemented by the Darling Downs Indigenous Health Unit, dovetails best practice suicide intervention with a whole of community approach. Regular community leader and clinician leader meetings have led to the development of an agreed shared framework for suicide prevention, a comprehensive regional map of support services and clear care pathways, a focus on wholistic community-based and clinical support for community members identified as most vulnerable, and 131 community members and service providers trained in I-ASIST and Safe Talks suicide prevention programs.

As part of *Better Care Together, a plan for Queensland's state funded mental health alcohol and other drugs services to 2027*, \$62 million has been allocated for specific First Nations initiatives over five years to 2027. These include:

- Expanding and enhancing funding for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health organisations to deliver Social and Emotional Wellbeing Community Support Services.
- Enhancing access to specialist alcohol and other drugs treatment delivered through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health organisations, targeted existing specialist providers in areas of identified need.

- Providing culturally appropriate specialist mental health alcohol and other drugs in-reach and transitional support for First Nations young people who experience detention in Southeast Queensland.
- Expanding culturally appropriate social and emotional wellbeing responses to three adult correctional centres in northern Queensland.
- Enhancing access to specialist alcohol and other drugs treatment and harm reduction responses to support communities with Alcohol Management Plans.
- Establishing a child and adolescent mental health team at the Southern Queensland Centre of Excellence Inala to deliver culturally appropriate specialist mental health treatment and care for First Nations children, young people and their families.

In addition, \$230 million has been allocated under *Better Care Together* over five years to 2027 for new and enhanced services to respond to mental health crisis and reduce the impact of suicide. These include:

- Expanding the Zero Suicide in Healthcare initiative which supports best practice healthcare for the assessment and treatment of people of risk of suicide for people in contact with the health system.
- Partnering with Queensland Ambulance Service to expand the co-responder model for people experiencing suicidality or in mental health crisis. This includes alternative models for regional and rural Queensland to consider dispersed populations.
- Partnering with the Queensland Mental Health Commission to build capacity for culturally responsive and sustainable mental health supports and suicide postvention support targeted in four Indigenous communities in northern Queensland that are impacted by suicide.
- Increasing the capacity of the existing 1300 MHCALL telephone line to provide access to local mental health services for information and assistance in times of mental health crisis via a centralised phone number.
- Expanding The Way Back Support Service which provides proactive psychosocial support for up to three months for anyone presenting to a Hospital and Health Service following a suicide attempt or crisis. A dedicated pathway has been established and enables First Nations peoples to access the service in the Wide Bay region. While this is the only dedicated pathway currently available in Queensland, The Way Back Support Service is designed to be safe and inclusive of anyone over the age of 15 years and is currently available across 10 Hospital and Health Services in Queensland.

Suicide prevention is a responsibility shared by all levels of government. The Queensland Aboriginal Islander Health Council (QAIHC) is establishing the Commonwealth-funded Culture Care Connect program supporting the integration of suicide prevention planning and aftercare services through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led and coordinated approaches with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs). Building workforce capacity and capability is a key component of this strategy, including the delivery of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health First Aid training.

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap has 19 national socio-economic targets across areas that have an impact on life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander people, including early years, education, economic participation, justice, child protection, housing, domestic and family violence, cultural and language support and social and emotional wellbeing. The socio-economic targets are monitored and made publicly available by the Australian Government Productivity Commission.

The target for Socioeconomic outcome area 14, which is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy high levels of social and emotional wellbeing, is a significant and sustained reduction in suicide of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people towards zero. There is no specified trajectory or expected timeline for achieving zero suicide. This is because there is no acceptable rate of suicide – today or at any other time.