LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Ms J Carney **to** Minister for Family and Community Services

Mental Health Services - Output Program

Minister in Budget Book 3 2004/05, p132 the following Budget Highlight appeared:

'the 2004/05 mental health budget has funding to address increasing demand for essential community-based mental health services. A four-year program to reform mental health services commenced in 2003/04 with $2 million spent in that year and increasing to $4.6m in 2004-05':

1. Minister, given that we are now half way through your program of reform, what changes have been made to the delivery of mental health services?

2. What outputs were achieved this financial year for the additional $4.6 million, which I gather was attached to the reform outcomes?

ANSWER

1.   The following changes have been made to the delivery of mental health services:

Increased services to rural and remote communities including:
- Establishment of additional clinical and Aboriginal Mental Health Worker positions and increasing the frequency of mental health service visits to rural and remote communities; and
- Commencement of visiting psychiatrist services to remote communities to support the locally based primary health services.

Increased Child and Adolescent Services including:
- Additional nursing, allied health and psychiatrist positions; and
- Commencement of visiting services to regional centres.

Expansion of Acute Assessment and After-hours services by:
- Creating Consultation Liaison Nurse positions in Royal Darwin Hospital and Alice Springs Hospital; and
- Redeveloping and expanding the after-hours service in Darwin in order to provide an improved response to the Emergency Department and to the general community.
- Creating a 'sub-acute' specialist support capacity to work with the non-government sector to ensure appropriate clinical support to new community based services.

Increasing community based support and rehabilitation services provided by NGOs in Darwin and Alice Springs including:
- Expansion of disability support and rehabilitation programs;
- Commencement of an 18 month trial of sub-acute individual care packages; and
- Funding to support and sustain consumer and carer organisations and to undertake mental health promotion activities.

Improvements in safety and quality of mental health services including:

- Clinical risk management review, clinical audits, critical incident review, case-load acuity measurement and discharge care coordination processes. Revised policies and procedures for risk assessment, complaints management and provision of information to consumers and carers have been implemented.
- Workforce retention and development initiatives such as an increase in the education budget for mental health service clinicians, expansion of the Registrar Training Program and commencement of a national and international recruitment strategy for mental health nurses.
- Top End Mental Health Service (TEMHS) achieved Australian Council of Healthcare Standards (ACHS) Accreditation in February 2004 (TEMHS delivers services to three quarters of the NT population). Central Australian Mental Health Service (CAMHS) have completed the self-assessment and ACHS will conduct the first organisation wide assessment in November 2005.
- Modifications to inpatient facilities to address safety issues in the Alice Springs and Top End Inpatient Units.

2. Outputs in 2004/05 include a:
   - 30% increase in hospital separations (from 1196 in 03/04 to 1554 in 04/05);
   - 20% increase in numbers of individuals seen (from 3903 in 03/04 to 4696 in 04/05); and
   - 20% increase in individual occasions of service (from 42,911 in 03/04 to 51,142 in 04/05.

These outputs do not include service activity in the non government sector which received a substantial funding increase during this period.

In addition, $898,184 of the new funding has been allocated recurrently to replace funding previously provided by the Australian Government and would not have resulted in any increased output activity.