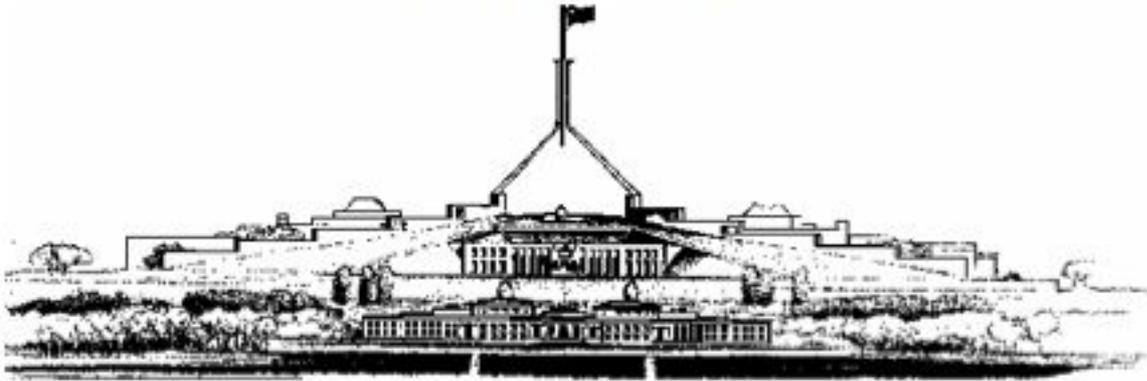




COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Mental Health

SPEECH

Tuesday, 24 March 2015

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

Date Tuesday, 24 March 2015	Source House
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Questioner	Responder
Speaker Marles, Richard, MP	Question No.

Mr MARLES (Corio) (16:26): Labor fully supports today's calls by the mental health sector, calling on the Prime Minister to maintain funding for mental health services. The government needs to come clean, by announcing its plans now for a strong mental health system for the future. A Mental Health Australia survey late last year showed that 85 per cent of not-for-profit mental health agencies are losing trust in the Abbott Liberal government because of its failure to provide certainty for the sector. The survey also reported that nine out of 10 mental health organisations would need to reduce staff, and most would need to reduce services, if they did not find out about their funding future. The government continues to sit on its final report of the review into mental health services that was provided to the government in November last year.

Labor has repeatedly put forward motions in the Senate calling on the government to table the first two reports of its mental health review so that the mental health sector, including consumers, could have a broader conversation about mental health in this country. But the government has stubbornly refused, leaving the sector mired in uncertainty and, disgracefully, leaving vulnerable Australians with mental health disorders without any certainty or security about the future of their services. What we are left by this government's callous cold shoulder to the sector is a tsunami of uncertainty for mental health providers.

In my community of Geelong, Headspace is but one organisation helping people with stress, anxiety and mental health issues. Headspace deals with 2,000 individual visitors each and every year who, combined, give rise to 6,400 operational visits throughout the year. There are 33 staff at Headspace, with 13 additional staff employed under the Access to Allied Psychological Services funding. All of that is now without any certainty from the federal government about its future funding, and, as a result, the excellent and very important work they do will be in jeopardy from June this year. The lifeline they offer vulnerable people in our community is critical, and we must ensure those services are not lost. Losing these services would throw our mental health services into a state of crisis. We must have confidence in our system, for all who use it and who rely upon it. This government must commit to building a strong and robust mental health system. Instead, the Abbott government seems intent on destroying it. This uncertainty is unfair to an already vulnerable sector within our community. They absolutely deserve better than the uncertainty that this government is offering, and so I urge the Abbott government to resolve this matter and make clear that funding for these important services will continue beyond June.