



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Mental Health

SPEECH

Wednesday, 24 July 2019

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

<p>Date Wednesday, 24 July 2019 Page 111 Questioner Speaker Marles, Richard, MP</p>	<p>Source House Proof Yes Responder Question No.</p>
--	---

Mr MARLES (Corio—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (10:29): Mental health does not discriminate. It affects us all in ways that are, for some, often too difficult to express and for others too difficult to comprehend. The government and opposition both understand that mental health is a serious issue that demands our attention. One in five Australians suffer from a mental health issue. The royal commission into Victoria's mental health system has shed light on the harrowing reality of the current gaps in our mental health support services. This Monday, 22 July, reporter Melissa Cunningham, from *The Age*, reported on evidence submitted to the royal commission. She wrote:

About two Victorians are taking their own lives each day, with about half the people who killed themselves seeking help from health services in the six weeks before they died.

She also reported that 'almost 370 Victorians have died by suicide so far this year, with the number expected to soar to 740 by the end of the year'. The total last year was 600.

My electorate of Corio has not been an exception to these devastating statistics. The government's own figures show that 15.8 per cent of residents of Greater Geelong are experiencing high or very high levels of psychological distress. I met with Reid Maxwell and Mark James from Mind Works Geelong on 15 July in my Geelong office. Mind Works Geelong have been operating in the Greater Geelong region for over 20 years, providing support to locals who are experiencing mental health uncertainty. But they are experiencing significant increases in their work in services and require more support from this government to keep offering help to those in need of it. Prior to the last election, the Minister for Health announced that a re-elected Morrison government would establish a mental health facility in the Corio electorate. The Prime Minister, in a press release titled, 'Making suicide prevention a national priority', on 8 July said:

... I am committed to taking all necessary action to tackle this issue, ensuring Australian families, communities and those facing challenges get the support they need.

I agree that that action is necessary.

It was also reported in the *Geelong Independent* on 8 May this year that:

Geelong is set to receive a \$14 million adult mental health centre if the Liberal government is elected at this month's federal election.

It was also reported that this government expected the first centres to 'open in 2021', but that no site had 'yet been determined for the Geelong location'. I have written to the Minister for Health in relation to this commitment, and I call on the minister to urgently outline a time line for when this inclusive mental health services centre that caters for everyone will be operational.

The Prime Minister named tackling youth mental health as one of his priorities if re-elected. Well, he was. Now it is time to start delivering on this government's promise. Tackling mental health is an area far too serious to be the subject of political hand-wringing and buck-passing. In this spirit, I call on the government to fast-track the creation of the mental health service in Geelong.