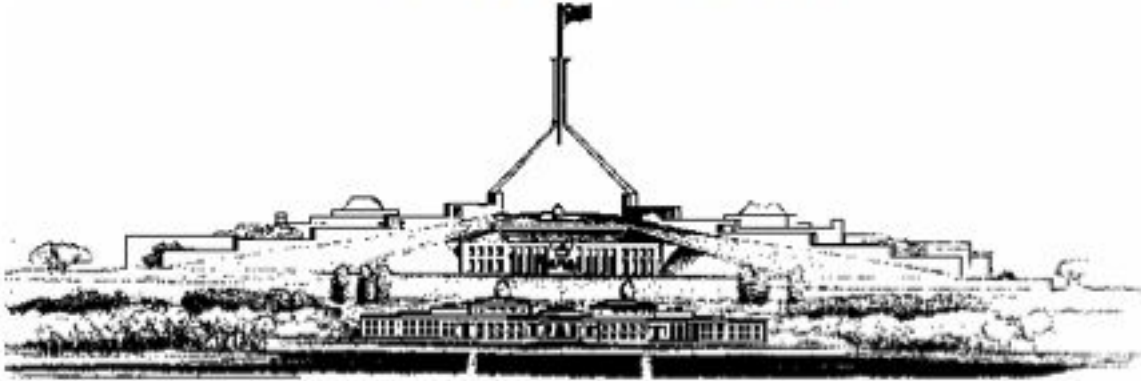




COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

COVID-19: Mental Health

SPEECH

Wednesday, 10 June 2020

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

Date	Wednesday, 10 June 2020	Source	House
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Speaker	Liu, Gladys, MP	Question No.	

Ms LIU (Chisholm) (10:23): COVID-19 has had a devastating effect on many Australians, and many people are struggling, whether it be due to unemployment, social isolation or a range of other difficulties that people are currently facing because of it. Regardless of the cause, the Australian community, as always, has come together to help others through these difficult times. Mental health and suicide prevention are the government's highest health priorities, and I'm proud that it is a central feature of the Commonwealth's Long Term National Health Plan. Unfortunately, mental health is the leading cause of both disability and premature death in Australia. It is sad to know that nearly half of people aged 18 to 85 will experience a mental disorder at some point in their life.

The coalition government is doing more than any previous government to safeguard the mental health of Australians. We expect funding to reach \$5.2 billion this year alone, and \$736 million in additional funding was provided in the last budget. I am especially pleased to see the inclusion of more than \$500 million for the largest youth mental health and suicide prevention plan in the country's history. This is an important issue and I'm glad to see it receive the funding it deserves. We are delivering more frontline services that meet the specific needs of local communities through a record \$1.54 billion investment in our Primary Health Networks. We are providing secure long-term support for local psychologists, mental health nurses and social workers, ensuring that the right services are available.

Back in March this year, Prime Minister Scott Morrison and the coalition government announced \$74 million to go towards the provision of mental health services for Australians who are understandably anxious and stressed about the impacts of COVID-19. This included setting up a dedicated COVID-19 wellbeing support line in partnership with Beyond Blue. Together we will get through this crisis and emerge on the other side safe and sound. In May, the Prime Minister again delivered in this area, announcing an additional \$48.1 million for the National Mental Health and Wellbeing Pandemic Response Plan. This government is ensuring people who need help can get the support they need, where and when they need it.

The coalition government is doing its bit in this space, but I cannot let go by an opportunity to speak about the excellent work of some organisations in my electorate of Chisholm who are doing the hard work to assist those in need. Organisations such as St Vincent de Paul, the Salvation Army, Crossway Baptist Church, NewHope Baptist Church and UnitingCare East Burwood Centre provide numerous services to people struggling through these times, and I'm proud to work with these great organisations to ensure that everyone in Chisholm is able to get the help they need. My office has been contacted by many people in these difficult times, and it pains my heart to know so many people are struggling with the consequences of COVID-19. But I'm glad to say that help is there. These organisations have helped with food parcels, food delivery services, financial assistance for those doing it tough or counselling for people dealing with the restrictions over the last few months. The people of Chisholm can rest assured that these organisations are here for them in times of need. I will endeavour to work with these organisations to serve the people of Chisholm.