



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**PROOF**

**Federation Chamber**

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**Mental Health**

**SPEECH**

**Monday, 16 October 2017**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

**Date** Monday, 16 October 2017  
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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** O'Brien, Ted, MP

**Source** House  
**Proof** Yes  
**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Mr TED O'BRIEN** (Fairfax) (17:41): I thank my team Queensland colleague, the member for Fisher, for the motion he has moved today—a motion that both congratulates the Turnbull government on its record of mental health funding and encourages all governments to do more. By any measure, this government is prioritising mental health. This government is prioritising the very real mental health needs of many vulnerable everyday Australians, including our Defence Force veterans and those isolated by distance.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare estimates that 45 per cent of Australians will experience some form of mental health disorder in their lifetime. That's 7½ million Australians—69,000 people in my electorate alone. More disturbingly, 54 per cent do not access treatment.

Today I join with my colleagues to congratulate the government on its highly focused and targeted approach to mental health funding in the 2017 budget to broaden the scope and accessibility of mental health services and help to address this disturbing figure. This government has consulted with the sector, asking those delivering mental health services on the front line where the service gaps are. And now we're addressing them—an additional \$80 million for mental health services for those not eligible for the NDIS; an additional \$11.1 million to prevent suicide in the very locations crying out for more help; \$50 million to assist our Defence Force members, veterans and families; \$9.5 million to expand mental health first-aid training in communities that need it most; \$9.1 million to support rural mental health services and the appointment of the first National Rural Health Commissioner; and an additional \$15 million for mental health research benefiting organisations like the Thompson Institute—to which my colleague, the member for Fisher, also referred—which is in our home region of the Sunshine Coast.

The Thompson Institute will provide a better understanding of the underlying neurobiology of mental health disorders, leading to the development of treatments for disorders and not just their symptoms. This is essential to the holistic and multifaceted approach to dealing with mental health in Australia. And the government is acting—it's acting fast.

The National Mental Health Commission's final report into suicide and self-harm prevention services available to current and former serving ADF members and their families was delivered in March this year and received over \$50 million in funding in the budget. There are approximately 3,200 veterans and their families living in my electorate of Fairfax. All are set to benefit under this initiative. Mental health disorders account for the third most prevalent burden of disease or cause of premature death in Australia, just behind cancer and cardiovascular disease. I commend the work being done by organisations such as headspace, R U OK, the Black Dog Institute and men's sheds. They all work tirelessly to educate the community and help end the stigma surrounding mental illness. The work of organisations like these—thousands of them registered right across Australia—stand to benefit from funding announced by the Turnbull government. In fact, all Australians benefit.

Better understanding as well as targeted and early treatment of mental health disorders reduces the burden on the health system and helps prevent the slide into homelessness, poverty and substance abuse which so often goes hand in hand with untreated mental health disorders. But it can't stop here. We must continue our support, funding crucial research and funding specialist prevention and support services for those with mental illnesses. We must continue to ask, 'Where can we do more? How can we do more?' It's easy for the stresses of life to overwhelm us all at times. No-one in this country, no-one in this building or this chamber, should ever feel that there is nowhere to go. I urge all feeling this way to reach out, because help is available.