

## **YOUTH DEPRESSION**

**Thursday, 3 May 2007**

**The Hon. A.L. EVANS:** I seek leave to make a brief explanation before asking the Minister for Mental Health and Substance Abuse a question about depression in young adults.

Results from the National Youth Survey 2006 carried out by Mission Australia indicated that depression is a top concern for 49.4 per cent of young people in South Australia aged 18 to 24, which is 6 per cent higher than the national average. Some 30 per cent of these respondents also believe that there is not enough information available to them in relation to this issue. According to recent research, suicide is the third most common cause of death amongst 18 to 24 year olds. It is also widely known that depression is a major contributor to suicide. My questions to the minister are as follows:

1. What measure is the state government taking to ensure that young adults in South Australia are well informed about the issues surrounding depression?
2. How much of the state government's funding towards the national initiative beyondblue is directed towards assisting young adults?

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO (Minister for Mental Health and Substance Abuse):** I thank the honourable member for his important questions. Indeed, depression is a very serious matter for everyone in our community, particularly our young people. The South Australian government has funded a number of programs, in addition to federal government initiatives. The South Australian government has funded the Mental Health First Aid Program to the tune of about \$225 000 to assist in raising the South Australian community's general awareness of mental health and the issue of prevention of suicide and self harm. Although that is targeted at the broader community, it also includes young people. Some of the other initiatives include the National Suicide Prevention Strategy, which has received an additional \$62.4 million funding over five years for suicide prevention activities. The strategy is being implemented in South Australia through a steering committee that reviews and monitors state-wide projects,

and the South Australian Department of Health is represented on that committee.

In the area of youth suicide prevention, a number of initiatives are in place to help youth to access, in particular, mental health information and services. Work in this area includes school programs about mental health, improving responses to people of all ages who may be at risk and increasing services on the ground. This includes, for example, the expansion of the number of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service workers. This is part of the Healthy Young Minds program, which involves 22 extra CAMHS workers and four extra psychiatrists. We have also put in place co-morbidity positions which are targeted at young people and which involve experts who are skilled in the discipline of mental health and who also have a sound knowledge base in drug and alcohol and other substance abuse and, in particular, their effect on young people.

The sad fact is that some effects of drugs tend to increase episodes of depression. Work in the youth mental health area is undertaken by many departments and agencies who work together, both in the state government and with the federal Department of Health and Ageing. It is worth noting some of the really important work that the Social Inclusion Board has done, and there is also a priority with both the redesign of existing services and the roll-out of the 26 new Healthy Young Minds positions. That is aimed to give an added focus and coordination to youth services in particular, especially those aimed at suicide prevention. As for the actual figures for beyondblue, I will take that part of the question on notice and bring back a response.