

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mental Health Services

[Ms RISHWORTH](#) (Kingston) (7.20 p.m.)—Treating mental health effectively is critical to ensure a happy, healthy and productive society. Governments need to consider not only the resources they provide for mental health services but also the framework that ensures that these services are effective in addressing both treatment and prevention. Governments need to start considering mental health on a continuum from healthy to acute illness, not as a dichotomy between illness and health. Not treating mental health on a continuum has led to the evolution of the current mental health system that offers effectively two options of care: care in acute mental health beds or care in the community. Working as a psychologist in primary mental health, I saw these two options fail a number of people on a continuing basis. I saw many people who have had a life challenge or a crisis which has exacerbated their mental illness and led to a relapse of symptoms. For many of these clients, their symptoms were not serious enough for them to be considered in need of acute hospitalisation. However, they did require more mental health assistance than was offered by community care. I often had to sit by and watch the mental health of my clients deteriorate until their symptoms were serious enough to be considered for acute hospitalisation.

For this reason I was very pleased to see the innovative approach of the South Australian government, contained in the *Stepping up* report. The report endorses a stepped care model, which seeks to fill the current gap between community care and acute hospital care by providing different levels of care, including 24-hour supported accommodation, community recovery centres and intermediate care beds. This approach is designed to match the appropriate level of care with the client's needs at any one time. This approach also allows for the level of care to be changed, depending on how healthy a client is at any one time. We can no longer just see illness and health; we need to look at symptoms and how we best can match the level of care we give to these clients.

In addition, I am very pleased to see the South Australian government is providing mental health beds in hospitals and in general community settings, ensuring that services are provided where clients are. When I was working as a psychologist in a community setting I saw a number of clients who required much more intensive multidiscipline routine treatment, much more complex than the treatment that I and the local GP were able to provide. However, I had to continue treating these clients because the specialised services were located on the other side of the metropolitan area of Adelaide. These clients were not in a position to be able to travel 40 to 60 kilometres to access services. The barriers to travel by these clients included age, financial constraints and the seriousness of their symptoms. Without services in their local area, they did not get the adequate treatment they required.

Those with mental illness are very vulnerable and they need the support of their family. In my experience, positive family support has immense benefit for a client's recovery. This means having the family close by, even when the client is hospitalised. Once again, I support the state government's initiative to not only increase the number of beds available to mental health patients but also locate these beds close to where clients and their families live.

I was very pleased when I saw the announcement of new mental health facilities being built at the Flinders Medical Centre and a community recovery centre at Noarlunga which will be able to provide more inpatient services to those suffering mental health difficulties in the southern suburbs of Adelaide. In

contrast to what the member for Sturt is suggesting, the state government's redevelopment of the Glenside site is about providing state-of-the-art services in line with best practice for mental health. I would particularly like to draw the House's attention to the consolidation of drug and alcohol services and mental health services. This integration is long overdue. It was extremely frustrating working as a psychologist trying to— *(Time expired)*

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—Order! The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.