# NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO. 2665**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION IN INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 26 NOVEMBER 2021**

**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 29)**

**Ms M D Hlengwa (IFP) to ask the Minister of Health:**

Whether, in light of the fact that on 25 October 2021 the world commemorated World Mental Health Day and the acting Director-General of Health, Dr Nicholas Crisp, during a webinar hosted by his department described the current investment into mental health services as frightening while a very low number of persons actually receive the care they need, his department has come up with a solid plan to address the issue; if not, why not; if so, what are the full, relevant details?

###### NW3150E

**REPLY:**

Yes. The Department has the National Mental Health Policy Framework and Strategic Plan.

The number of people with severe mental disorders who do not receive the care, treatment and rehabilitation for their mental health conditions is not only high in South Africa but across the Low and middle-Income Countries. The Department of health has developed a plan to improve access to mental health services in the country and to ensure that people living with mental health conditions receive the care they need.

The plan is derived from the provisions of the Mental Health Care Act, 2002 (Act No 17 of 2002), which among others, aims to make comprehensive and quality mental health care, treatment and rehabilitation services available to the population equitably, efficiently, integrated at all levels, and in the best interest of mental health care users, within the limits of available resources.

The National Mental Health Policy Framework and Strategic Plan ,which is being updated and reviewed, further provides a blue print for strategic interventions to improve access to mental health services for the general population.

The details of the plan includes:

1. Mental health promotion and prevention of mental illness initiatives, which are not restricted to the Health Department, but integrated into policies and plans of relevant sectors, such as Social Development, Education, Correctional Services and other stakeholder departments.
2. Integration of mental health into all aspects of general health care across all levels of the health system to reduce the burden of untreated mental health conditions.
3. Ensuring that psychotropic medication as provided on the Standard Treatment Guidelines and the Essential Drug List (EDL) are available at all levels of health care.
4. Strengthening district based mental health services through establishment of district specialist mental health teams to ensure comprehensive services and integration at primary health care.
5. Enhancing institutional capacity and governance through establishment of Mental Health Review Boards in all provinces. These are quasi-judicial structures appointed by the Members of Executive Councils as prescribed in the Mental Health Care Act, 2002 (Act No 17 of 2002), to oversee that the human rights of mental health care users are upheld.
6. Improving human resource capacity for mental health services and training of health professionals including ongoing routine supervision and mentoring at all levels of the health system.
7. Strategic purchasing of services from health professionals through the NHI Conditional Grant to improve capacity for early identification, diagnosis, treatment and referral, at Primary Health Care including forensic mental health services.
8. Improving infrastructure for mental health services in Primary health care facilities, general hospitals and specialized psychiatric hospitals.
9. Development of community mental health day care and residential care facilities for people with severe mental illness and severe or profound intellectual disability
10. Strengthening Inter-sectoral collaboration to address the social determinants of mental illness
11. Ongoing surveillance and research on mental health services in the country. The Department recently conducted research on the evaluation of the health system cost on mental health services and programmes in the country; and on the mental health investment case to inform evidence based mental health plans and programmes.

END.