

# PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

## Department of Health

### Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

#### Australian Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

4 August 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000427

**Total PPE and total staff supplied to Victorian aged care facilities:**

**Spoken**

**Hansard Page number:** 17

**Senator:** James Paterson

**Question:**

Senator PATERSON: Thank you, Chair. Given the limited time, I'll put on notice: what is the total PPE and the total staff supplied to Victorian aged-care centres?

**Answer:**

Personal protective equipment:

As at 23 September 2020, the National Medical Stockpile has supplied over 17 million masks, 4 million gowns, 11 million gloves, 4 million goggles and face shields, 85,000 bottles of hand sanitiser, and 160,000 clinical waste bags to support staff and residents in aged care facilities in Victoria. This includes dispatches through the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, and directly to facilities experiencing outbreaks or critical supply shortages.

Workforce:

As at 20 September 2020, well over 1,000 Commonwealth funded surge workforce\* staff have been supplied to Victorian aged care services, including: Recruitment, Consulting and Staffing Association (RCSA) has supplied staff to fill 22,339 shifts since 1 July 2020

- Healthcare Australia has supplied staff to fill 4,011 shifts since 1 July 2020
- Mable has supplied 95 contractors to fill 1,898 shifts (shift arrangements negotiated by worker and provider) since mid-March
- Aspen Medical has supplied staff to fill 601 roles, which includes Clinical First Responder deployments, since mid-March
- HealthX has supplied 35 staff to fill 495 shifts
- Torrens has supplied 59 staff to fill 426 shifts

\* Workforce surge providers operate different business models.

The Department of Health has also put in place additional arrangements to increase the Commonwealth's capacity to support aged care providers. This includes:

- State government nurses from Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania to assist in Victoria. As at 23 September 2020, the following have been deployed:
  - two South Australia Government teams of 18 clinical personnel.
  - three Western Australia Government teams of 19 clinical personnel.
  - one Tasmania Government team of 7 clinical personnel and 2 support staff.
- Teams of volunteer staff from interstate aged care providers, referred to as National Aged Care Emergency Response (NACER) teams, have also been deployed to Victoria. As at 23 September 2020, 12 teams, with a total of 76 personnel, have been deployed.
- Clinical health staff provided by health services have filled 4,718 shifts in aged care facilities as at 23 September 2020.

Australian Medical Assistance Team (AUSMAT) has also been deployed to support and act under the direction of the Victorian Aged Care Response Centre (VACRC). As at 23 September 2020, AUSMAT has completed 174 visits to 80 residential aged care facilities in Victoria.

Teams of Australian Defence Force personnel are continuing to conduct clinical screens of residential aged care facilities, assessing the facilities infection prevention and control practices, in support of the VACRC prevention teams.

- As at 23 September 2020, Australian Defence Force personnel have visited a total of 546 residential aged care facilities.

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**Department of Health**

**Senate Select Committee on COVID-19**

**Australian Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic**

**4 August 2020**

**PDR Number: IQ20-000431**

**Funding announced to support Aged Care**

**Spoken**

**Hansard Page number: 24**

**Senator:** Katy Gallagher

**Question:**

CHAIR: Yes, I understood that. And you'll take on notice for me whether you'll consider extending that payment to others providing care in a residential aged-care facility?

Senator Colbeck: I will, but I'll also make the point that we provided an extra \$78 million directly to providers to assist them with workforce retention. So, the providers probably already do have capacity to pay other workers. Some I know have. But we provided an extra \$78 million directly to the providers to—

Senator LAMBIE: Do you think we could have the details on exactly what that money is doing—exactly what you've told them to do with that money? It's no good telling us you've just chucked money out there. Exactly what is it stipulated for?

Senator SIEWERT: Is it tied funding? What we've seen in the past is that it hasn't been tied to wages.

CHAIR: Okay—the chair's trying to regain control of this in the dying minutes. Senator Colbeck, on behalf of the committee, I think it would be useful if we had an update on the funding that's been announced to support aged care, how much has been spent and what it's been spent on.

Senator Colbeck: I'm happy to provide that.

**Answer:**

As at 31 August 2020, the Australian Government has provided more than \$1.5 billion to support senior Australians and aged care providers in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

These measures include:

- \$78.3 million in temporary additional funding for residential aged care providers that is being paid by a 1.2 per cent increase to the rate of basic subsidy from 1 March 2020 to 31 August 2020. As this funding is paid through the regular subsidies, it was expended evenly throughout the six-month period and has now been paid.
- \$26.9 million for a 30 per cent temporary increase to the viability supplement and the homeless supplement from 1 March 2020 to 31 August 2020. As this funding is paid through the regular subsidies, it was expended evenly throughout the six-month period and has now been paid.
- \$205 million for an additional COVID-19 specific support one-off payment to all Commonwealth funded residential aged care providers, aimed at covering the additional costs of caring for the health and wellbeing of residents during the pandemic. This was paid in early June 2020.
- \$234.9 million for direct care workers in residential and home care settings through the Aged Care Workforce Retention Bonus Payment measure, which sees payments made to providers to be directly passed on to workers. With the additional funding announced, the Government has now committed \$440 million to the retention bonus. As at 31 August 2020, \$256.9 million has been committed.
- The Aged Care COVID-19 Preparedness measure provides \$101.2 million to support aged care services through the COVID-19 pandemic. There are two streams of funding which are demand driven:
  - Workforce surge support
  - COVID-19 Aged Care Support Program (reimbursement of costs incurred managing an outbreak)
  - Implementation of the workforce surge stream has committed over \$28 million for:
    - development of nine online training modules
    - four organisations to deliver workforce surge support
    - five mobile testing clinics and substantial communication activities.
- Additional workforce surge suppliers are being sourced to boost supply. Significant work is in train to support the Victorian Aged Care Response Centre.

- \$92.2 million - support for home care and CHSP providers. \$22.2 million of this is for a 1.2 per cent increase to the rate of basic home care subsidy from 1 March 2020 to 31 August 2020. As this funding is paid through the regular subsidies, it was expended evenly throughout the six-month period and has now largely been paid. The remaining \$70.2 million was for CHSP grant funding. \$40 million was spent at the end of 2019-20 and the remaining \$30.2 million is for 2020-21 with over half already spent or allocated.
- \$59.3 million – for meal delivery services such as Meals on Wheels to support senior Australians and a safety net for senior Australians in need of immediate support access food and groceries. To date \$49 million has been allocated to providers.
- \$10 million - for the Community Visitors Scheme to ensure older Australians in aged care are not socially isolated due to visiting restrictions. To date \$7.6 million has been allocated to providers.

When residential aged care providers lodge their annual return at end of October 2020 they will be required to provide information regarding the additional funding they received and the additional costs they incurred in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of their residents during COVID-19.

On 21 August 2020, the Australian Government announced a further \$172.1 million in funding to boost national aged care sector preparedness and respond to the pandemic in Victoria, including on workforce, training and mental health measures.

On 31 August 2020, the Government also announced an additional \$563.3 million to further support the aged care sector's response to COVID-19. The package includes an additional:

- \$245 million to build on the \$205 million COVID-19 support payment including continuation of the 30 per cent increase in the viability supplement and homeless supplement for an additional six months
- \$92.4 million to extend the Supporting Aged Care Workers in COVID-19 Grant from eight weeks to 12 weeks
- \$154.5 million for a third workforce retention payment based on employment as at 30 November 2020
- \$71.4 million for the Commonwealth Home Support Programme to expand support for residents who temporarily relocate from residential facilities to live with families due to concerns about COVID-19.