

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

29 September 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000689

Funding criteria for on-site clinical lead

Spoken

Hansard Page number: 19

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Question:

Mr Lye: What we're looking for is a leadership position, somebody whose responsibility within the service it is to provide leadership—clinical leadership—around IPC and the like. The learning, particularly from those facilities which have had outbreaks, is that that's critically important—including somebody who, when the ADF comes through or the clinical first responder nurse comes in or state and territory health experts come in, is a leadership person to both liaise with those providers of additional support and can make sure that's translated into action across the service.

Senator SIEWERT: Thank you. Who's going to be able to apply for this funding?

Mr Lye: The funding is being provided to all providers according to a formula. There's a certain amount per bed for metro services—I think it's \$975—and about \$1,400 for non-metropolitan services.

Senator SIEWERT: Are you requiring a clinical lead, someone with clinical expertise, to be in the facility at all times?

Mr Lye: That's not part of what we've asked for. We want somebody who provides leadership and instils that across all staff.

Senator SIEWERT: Do they have to be a staff member, or are you saying they could hire somebody that could come in and provide that on a temporary, part-time or casual basis?

Mr Lye: We haven't specified that.

Senator SIEWERT: I'm a facility and I may not have nurses on board 24/7, for example, so I could get someone in casually to oversee the implementation?

Mr Lye: It's a leadership role that we're looking for, so it has to be connected to the governance of the organisation. We're looking for a person who can provide that leadership and for that leadership then to extend to the culture and service provision within the service. It can't be just somebody who comes in once off and then walks away and leaves no mark on the service. That doesn't meet the test.

Senator SIEWERT: Do you have that criteria that you've just outlined written down?

Mr Lye: We've started a discussion with facilities about that position. A lot of facilities already have that role and we're doing work with the state governments around provision of training to assist those organisations which haven't previously had that facility to make sure they get that level of basic training into the facility.

Senator SIEWERT: Could you provide the committee, on notice, obviously, with any information you have about how this will operate and the criteria you are using to assess the provision of these funds?

Mr Lye: Yes.

Answer:

- On 13 October 2020, the Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians sent a letter to providers of residential aged care setting the engagement of an infection prevention and control (IPC) lead in every facility as a requirement of the second COVID-19 support supplement.
- In October 2020, every approved provider of residential aged care received the second COVID-19 supplement. In November 2020, each provider of National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care (NATSIFAC) received the second COVID-19 supplement.
- An IPC lead:
 - must be a designated member of the nursing staff (either a registered or enrolled nurse) who has completed or is in the process of completing a suitable IPC course;
 - is employed by the approved provider and reports to the approved provider
 - observes, assesses and reports on the IPC of the service, and assists with developing procedures/provides advice within the service;
 - must be engaged onsite for each facility and dedicated to that facility; and
 - may have a broader role within the facility and could be an existing member of the nursing staff.
- The requirements of an IPC lead are that by 31 December 2020, the IPC lead must:
 - have completed the Department of Health COVID-19 infection control online training modules, specifically Infection Control Training – COVID 19 and all aged care modules (except 2.2 or 9.2 which relate to home care); and
 - have enrolled in or commenced a suitable IPC course (for completion by 28 February 2021). For an IPC course to be deemed suitable, it must focus on infection prevention and control; be specified at Level 8 of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF8); be delivered by a recognised education or training provider, and have an assessment, or assessments, that facilitate successful completion of the course.
- Providers were requested to report details of their nominated IPC lead to the Department by 4 December 2020.
- Providers are required to report on their use of the COVID-19 payment funds as part of their annual Aged Care Financial Report (ACFR).

Further information on IPC lead requirements is available on the Department of Health website at health.gov.au/ipc-leads.