

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

29 May 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000294

Question Subject: Investigation of aged care facilities that had COVID-19 outbreaks

Type of Question: Written

Senator: Katy Gallagher

Question:

Will the CMO or the Department refer the management of COVID-19 outbreaks at residential aged care facilities for investigation, including by the Royal Commission into Aged Care Safety and Quality? What actions will be taken to ensure that lessons are learned from Newmarch House and other facilities to assist in the event of further outbreaks?

Answer:

The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety (the Royal Commission) is independent of the Australian Government. Matters relating to how the inquiry will be conducted, submission processes and hearings, are for the Royal Commission to determine. In May 2020, the Royal Commission announced its intention to inquire into the impact of COVID-19 on residential and home aged care, consistent with its terms of reference to examine the aged care system in Australia. The Royal Commission has invited submissions from the public and organisations on any matter, including COVID-19, until 30 June 2020.

The Department of Health regularly reflects on lessons learnt from COVID-19 outbreaks in aged care services to ensure they are applied to improve management of future outbreaks. This has resulted in the Department sharing with the aged care sector learnings and key actions to be undertaken prior to, and in the event of, an outbreak. The Department commissioned an independent review of Newmarch House and the outcomes will be used to inform any further outbreaks.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

29 May 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000295

Question Subject: Aged care facility staff and funding

Type of Question: Written

Senator: Katy Gallagher

Question:

How many staff and how much funding has been allocated by the Department to date for replacement or additional staff across all residential aged care facilities due to COVID-19 outbreaks via the Mable online platform and through other staffing arrangements such as Aspen Medical? Please provide a breakdown for each of the following:

- o The name of the residential aged care facility by location, state or territory.
- o The number of aged care workers by qualification and residential aged care facility and by state or territory.
- o Funding provided by the Commonwealth to access staff via the online portal Mable as a total, by residential aged care facility or service provider and by state and territory.
- o Funding to access staff via Aspen Medical as a total, by residential aged care facility or service provider and by state and territory.

Answer:

Summary of the Aged Care Preparedness Workforce measure: workforce surge program

Activity	Organisation	Contract value (ex GST)	Contract period	No. of deployments /use	No. of staff
Surge workforce	Mable	Up to \$5.3m	3 April to 30 June 2020	3	40
Emergency Response Teams	Aspen Medical	Up to \$14.2m	9 April to 30 Sept 2020	12*	133

Note – Data as at 15 June 2020

**1 deployment supported across the 3 services in Tasmania*

The Department provided the additional detail requested at the in-camera session held on 11 June 2020, noting data previously provided was current as at 1 June 2020 (Mable) and 3 June 2020 (Aspen Medical).

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

29 May 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000296

Question Subject: Aspen Medical staff at Newmarch

Type of Question: Written

Senator: Katy Gallagher

Question:

1. On what date was the first time that Aspen Medical staff arrived on site at Newmarch House?
2. Why were Aspen Medical staff brought onsite at Newmarch House?
3. Who was responsible for all infection control protocols after April 11 at Newmarch House?
4. Who was responsible for ensuring all staff were using PPE appropriately and that there were no infection control breaches at Newmarch House?
5. 34 staff tested positive to the COVID-19 virus at Newmarch House. How many were Anglicare staff and how many were replacement staff?
6. How many days after the first staff member tested positive on 11 April were other Newmarch House staff and residents tested? Please provide a date.
7. How did the testing at Newmarch House occur?
 - o Was it onsite or offsite?
 - o Was it ongoing?
 - o Were there best practice methods applied to testing staff and residents or was it ad hoc?

Answer:

1. Aspen Medical staff were first on-site at Newmarch House on 20 April 2020.
2. Aspen Medical is contracted to provide surge when an aged care provider experiences a COVID-19 outbreak. Aspen Medical provided staff on-site at Newmarch House to cover shifts due to Newmarch House staff isolating as they were deemed close contacts by the New South Wales (NSW) public health unit (PHU).

Specialist support was also provided, including Clinical First Responders and Infection Control Practitioners, to complement and support Anglican Community Services staff and the PHU throughout the outbreak.

3. Anglican Community Services, as the approved provider, is responsible under the *Aged Care Act 1997*, for the quality of care and management of the Newmarch House facility, including infection control protocols throughout the outbreak.

When an infection outbreak is declared, the NSW PHU is responsible for preventing or minimising public health risks to the community. At Newmarch House, the NSW PHU provided infection control oversight and guidance to ensure the outbreak was contained and community harm was minimised. The PHU is also responsible for enforcing public health legislation and can issue directives to individuals or businesses.

At all times, Anglican Community Services was and is responsible for the Newmarch House service and ensuring all PHU directives are adhered to on-site.

4. Anglican Community Services is responsible for ensuring that any personal protective equipment (PPE) directives from the NSW PHU are implemented and followed, ensuring that staff are using PPE appropriately, and there are no infection control breaches.

The PHU, through the NSW Clinical Excellence Commission, provided clinical guidance and education to Anglican Community Services to build its capability to sustain infection control practices.

5. NSW Health reported COVID-19 test results to the Department of Health (the Department), for both staff and residents at Newmarch House. The reports do not differentiate between substantive staff and replacement staff. Therefore, the Department is unable to confirm how many staff, who tested positive for COVID-19, were Anglican Community Services employees or replacement staff from various agencies. However, the Department is aware at least one replacement staff member tested positive for COVID-19. Management of staff, whether employees or replacement staff, is the responsibility of Anglican Community Services.
6. Testing of staff and residents occurred from 12 April 2020, following the staff member returning a positive test on 11 April 2020.
7. Responses:
 - a. Newmarch House arranged for residents displaying symptoms to be tested on-site between 12 and 14 April 2020.
 - b. Staff identified as close contacts by NSW PHU were directed to be tested off-site at the Nepean Hospital between 12 and 14 April 2020.
 - c. All Newmarch House residents were tested on-site over 14 and 15 April 2020 by the NSW PHU.
 - d. All staff on duty were tested on-site on 14 April 2020, any staff not on duty were asked to go to the Nepean Hospital for priority testing.
 - e. Ongoing testing was undertaken at the direction of the NSW PHU throughout the outbreak. The majority of testing was undertaken on-site with an off-site option available for staff. Testing regimes and the type of tests used were determined by the NSW PHU.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

29 May 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000297

Question Subject: PPE advice to aged care facilities

Type of Question: Written

Senator: Katy Gallagher

Question:

What advice is being given to residential and home care providers who have requested access to the National Stockpile but are unable to get supplies of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) or those who are running out of PPE?

Answer:

Aged care providers have responsibility to source supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE) and should have sufficient levels on hand for any infectious outbreak. This, along with stock management, should be part of a provider's emergency management plan required under the *Aged Care Act 1997*.

The National Medical Stockpile (NMS) is available for emergency supply and to meet critical demand where supplies cannot be sourced from usual suppliers. It not intended to be a general supply line for PPE.

Aged care providers can request PPE by emailing the Department of Health at: agedcarecovidppe@health.gov.au. During the assessment of the request, a departmental officer will contact the provider and offer information about the priority criteria and/or eligibility for accessing PPE from the NMS.

The criteria used to determine which aged care services receive PPE from the NMS is based on urgency and clinical need. Priority is given:

- to aged care providers delivering services where there has been a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19;
- where there is reportable infectious disease with a clinical requirement for PPE; or

- where there is an immediate threat to the continuity of safe quality care due to lack of access to PPE supplies.

All facilities that have experienced an outbreak of COVID-19 have had their requests for PPE met. Additionally, a number of aged care services that did not experience an outbreak also requested supplies of PPE. In some instances, these have been accommodated even though they do not meet the primary NMS criteria for supply. On other occasions, aged care services are directed to a list of PPE suppliers available on the Therapeutic Goods Administration's Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's response to the COVID 19 pandemic

29 May 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000298

Question Subject: Staff sourcing via Mable

Type of Question: Written

Senator: Katy Gallagher

Question:

Have there been any issues, at any stage, for service providers sourcing aged care workers via the online platform Mable? If yes, please provide a reason why aged care staff could not be sourced via Mable.

Answer:

Mable modified a range of processes including strengthening pre-screening of care workers to ensure they were willing to work in COVID-19 environments and had the influenza vaccination. This improved the ability of providers to engage aged care workers via Mable.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

29 May 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000299

Question Subject: New payment to residential aged care providers funding announcement - 1 May 2020

Type of Question: Written

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Question:

1. Will the Department monitor and collect information on how these payments are being used by aged care providers? If so, how?
2. Will this information be used to inform future reforms in the aged care sector?
3. Is it intended that this new payment support increased staffing levels in aged care facilities?

Answer:

When providers lodge their annual return at end of October 2020 they will be asked to confirm payments have been used to meet additional COVID-19 related costs and support resident care during COVID-19.

This information, like all data collected by the Department, can be used to inform future policy consideration and reforms.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

29 May 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000300

Question Subject: Monitoring increases to staffing in aged care facilities

Type of Question: Written

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Question:

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation conducted a survey in May of aged care workers and found 80% reported no increases in care staff at their aged care facility to prepare for a covid-19 outbreak. Is the Department monitoring whether there have been any increases to staffing in aged care facilities?

Answer:

The Department of Health is aware that many providers have increased staffing in aged care facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Aged Care Quality Standards require approved providers of aged care to ensure they have a workforce that is sufficient, skilled and qualified to provide safe, respectful and quality care.

Plans for contingency staffing are required to be in place to respond to emergencies including an infectious outbreak as part of a provider's emergency management plan required under the *Aged Care Act 1997*.

The Aged Care COVID-19 Preparedness measure includes a workforce surge program to complement existing staff and provide critical surge cover where providers were not able to find staff through their usual recruitment channels. Aspen Medical and Mable have been engaged to deliver workforce surge to aged care facilities that have experienced an instance or outbreak of COVID-19.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

29 May 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000302

Question Subject: Measures to support senior Australians funding announcement –
20 March 2020

Type of Question: Written

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Question:

Is this package worth \$444.6 million new funding or generated from existing funds?

Answer:

The package includes \$374.4 million in new funding and \$70.2 million in available existing funds.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

29 May 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000306

Question Subject: Roll out of \$78.3 million for residential care

Type of Question: Written

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Question:

How will the additional \$78.3 million for residential care be rolled out to support continuity of workforce supply?

Answer:

The additional \$78.3 million to support continuity of workforce supply is being delivered through temporary increases to the subsidy and supplement rates paid to providers through Services Australia. The basic care subsidy paid on behalf of residents is being increased by 1.2 per cent, and the viability and homeless supplements are being increased by 30 per cent. These temporary rate increases apply for the six month period from 1 March 2020 to 31 August 2020 inclusive.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

29 May 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000307

Question Subject: Amount of Protective Personal Equipment (PPE) to residential aged care facilities

Type of Question: Written

Senator: Katy Gallagher

Question:

Has and is the Department of Health actively recording the amount of PPE used in Dorothy Henderson Lodge, Opal Bankstown or Newmarch House? If yes, please provide the amount of PPE by type for each of the facility and the dates PPE arrived on site. If no, why not?

Answer:

The Department of Health (the Department) has recorded the amount of personal protective equipment (PPE) supplied to Dorothy Henderson Lodge, Opal Bankstown and Newmarch House. The table below provides the amount of PPE supplied, as at 12 June 2020:

	P2/N95 respirators	Surgical masks	Gowns	Gloves	Total
Newmarch House	44,340	6,500	98,450	267,000	416,290
Dorothy Henderson Lodge	-	4,800	30,750	-	35,550
Opal Aged Care Bankstown	80	9,000	-	-	9,080

The Department does not have access to delivery dates for distribution of PPE. Stock is generally distributed by state and territory governments and, on occasion, direct from the National Medical Stockpile (NMS) to providers, and typically within 24 hours from request. The NMS replenishes state and territory reserves as required.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

29 May 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000309

Question Subject: My Aged Care and the surge of COVID-19 enquiries

Type of Question: Written

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Question:

How is My Aged Care dealing with the surge in covid-19 enquiries? What is the average call waiting time? Have additional staff been deployed to assist My Aged Care answer enquiries?

Answer:

Throughout the COVID-19 response period My Aged Care has consistently maintained an average speed to answer of below 30 seconds.

An additional \$12.3 million was provided to meet the expected surge in aged care specific COVID-19 enquiries. Additional staff were engaged to ensure call wait times remained low.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

29 May 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000311

Question Subject: Funding boost for aged care funding announcement

Type of Question: Written

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Question:

Is this package worth \$101.2 million new funding or generated from existing funds?

Answer:

The \$101.2 million Aged Care COVID-19 Preparedness measure is new funding announced on 11 March 2020 as part of the \$2.4 billion National Health Package.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

29 May 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000312

Question Subject: Upskilling of aged care workers during COVID-19

Type of Question: Written

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Question:

How many aged care workers were upskilled in coronavirus infection control through this package?

Answer:

The Australian Government has developed free, online COVID-19 Infection Control training courses. There are three courses available:

- infection prevention and control for COVID-19;
- specific training for aged care workers; and
- specific training focused on rural and remote communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.

As at 4 June 2020, 846,543 people have completed the basic infection prevention and control training course, including more than 133,000 aged care workers. In addition, completion rates of the aged care-specific modules are as follows:

Course name	Completions '000'
COVID 19 - Aged Care Module 1 - Personal Safety	87
COVID 19 - Aged Care Module 2 - Families and Visitors - Part 1 - Residential Care	69
COVID 19 - Aged Care Module 2 - Families and Visitors - Part 2 - In-home Care	66
COVID 19 - Aged Care Module 3 - COVID 19 and Aged Care	73
COVID 19 - Aged Care Module 4 - Outbreak Management Procedures	67
COVID 19 - Aged Care Module 5 - Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	66
COVID 19 - Aged Care Module 6 - Laundry	48
COVID 19 - Aged Care Module 7 - Cleaning	31
COVID 19 - Aged Care Module 8 - If you suspect a person has coronavirus COVID-19	63
COVID 19 - Aged Care Module 9 - Supporting Older Australians - Part 1 Residential Care	27
COVID 19 - Aged Care Module 9 - Supporting Older Australians - Part 2 In-Home Care	27

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's response to the COVID19 pandemic

29 May 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000313

Question Subject: Commonwealth assistance with PPE to aged care facilities

Type of Question: Written

Senator: Katy Gallagher

Question:

Is and was there a designated person at a Commonwealth level that has been assisting Dorothy Henderson Lodge, Opal Bankstown or Newmarch House with PPE supplies during their COVID-19 outbreaks? If yes, please provide details. If no, why not?

Answer:

Yes. The Department of Health allocates a designated case manager to aged care providers who experience a COVID-19 outbreak to offer and provide comprehensive support including assisting with facilitating access to PPE. This was in place for Dorothy Henderson Lodge, Opal Bankstown and Newmarch House.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

29 May 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000315

Question Subject: National PPE stockpile and potential second wave

Type of Question: Written

Senator: Katy Gallagher

Question:

Has the Department undertaken any analysis of what may happen to the national stockpile if there is a second wave of infection across the aged care system? If yes, please provide details. If not, why not?

Answer:

The Department of Health undertakes modelling to consider the potential personal protective equipment (PPE) needs of the Australian health system, including but not limited to aged care. This modelling projects potential need based on a number of the effective reproductive rate (R-eff). This includes scenarios where the reproductive rate rises well above what is currently being experienced in Australia.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

29 May 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000317

Question Subject: Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) with aged care service providers

Type of Question: Written

Senator: Katy Gallagher

Question:

What did the Federal Government do to ascertain how much PPE other aged care service providers had in stock?

Answer:

Providers have responsibility to source supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE) and should have sufficient levels on hand for any infectious outbreak. This, along with stock management, should be part of a provider's emergency management plan required under the *Aged Care Act 1997*. The National Medical Stockpile is available for emergency supply and to meet critical demand where supplies cannot be sourced from usual suppliers.

To fast track the supply of PPE to aged care services, the Department of Health established a dedicated mailbox for PPE requests. Requests from providers are triaged based on need and urgency, with priority given where there is a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19. On a case-by-case basis, departmental officers who assess a PPE request from an aged care service will contact the aged care provider to discuss its PPE stocks and individual supply needs.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

29 May 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000326

Question Subject: Unrestricted access to PPE

Type of Question: Written

Senator: Katy Gallagher

Question:

- Did the staff at Newmarch House have unrestricted access to all forms of PPE including hand sanitiser at all times when they have needed to use this type of equipment? If no, why not?
- How did staff at Newmarch House gain access to PPE? Was there a staff member responsible for stock and how it was provided? Could staff access PPE freely at any time with no barriers?

Answer:

The Department of Health supplied Newmarch House with all requested personal protective equipment (PPE) from the first day of the outbreak (12 April 2020) and continues to dispatch PPE on a weekly basis.

In relation to hand sanitiser, the Department of Health assisted Newmarch House to find suppliers who could supply this product.

Management and inventory control of PPE on-site, including access by staff, stock numbers and correct use of PPE, is the responsibility of Newmarch House.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's response to the COVID 19 pandemic

29 May 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000327

Question Subject: PPE training at Dorothy Henderson Lodge, Opal Bankstown and Newmarch House

Type of Question: Written

Senator: Katy Gallagher

Question:

- Who was responsible for training staff in the use of PPE at Dorothy Henderson Lodge, Opal Bankstown or Newmarch House? Who was responsible for staff adhering to all infection control protocols?
- Who was responsible for ensuring there was enough PPE on site at Dorothy Henderson Lodge, Opal Bankstown or Newmarch House?

Answer:

Approved providers of aged care services are responsible under the *Aged Care Act 1997* for the provision of quality of care and overall management of aged care services, including: ensuring sufficient levels of personal protective equipment (PPE); staff training in the appropriate use of PPE; and ensuring staff adhere to all infection control protocols.

The approved providers responsible for staff training in appropriate use of PPE and ensuring appropriate stock of PPE at Dorothy Henderson Lodge, Opal Bankstown and Newmarch House were: BaptistCare (Dorothy Henderson Lodge); Opal Aged Care (Opal Bankstown); and Anglican Community Services (Newmarch House).

To support all aged care providers and workers on the appropriate use of PPE, management of an outbreak and infection control, the Department of Health produced a range of resources including training modules, fact sheets and videos. These are available on the Department's website at: www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-the-health-and-aged-care-sector.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

29 May 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000329

Question Subject: \$205 million division of funding to aged care facilities

Type of Question: Written

Senator: Katy Gallagher

Question:

Can the Department of Health outline the processes it will undertake to identify what residential aged care facilities or service providers will spend funding on as part of the \$205 million allocated to manage COVID-19? Will residential aged care facilities or service providers have to report what this funding is spent on to the Department of Health? If not, why not?

Answer:

When providers lodge their annual return at the end of October 2020 they will be asked to confirm payments have been used to meet additional COVID-19 related costs and support resident care during COVID-19.

This information will be collected along with usual end-of-year financial reporting.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

29 May 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000335

Question Subject: Access to residents and home care recipients about their issues and concerns during COVID-19

Type of Question: Written

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Question:

What actions is the Department of Health undertaking to ensure pathways to directly talk to residents and home care recipients about their issues and concerns throughout the recovery phase of COVID-19?

Answer:

The Department of Health (the Department) is regularly meeting with organisations representing aged care recipients during COVID-19 and this will continue during the recovery phase. This includes the Older Person's Advocacy Network, COTA Australia, National Seniors Australia, Dementia Australia, and members of the Aged Care Sector Committee Diversity Sub-group.

The Australian Government-funded Older Person's Advocacy Network (OPAN) and the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (Commission) are the appropriate contact points for individuals who wish to raise issues or concerns in relation to their aged care services. OPAN, the Department and the Commission continue to promote these services, including through webinars, published resources, correspondence and a recent mail out to all residential aged care facilities.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

29 May 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000336

Question Subject: Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety investigating Newmarch House

Type of Question: Written

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Question:

1. Is the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety investigating Newmarch House and the impact of COVID more broadly? When do you anticipate that public hearings into COVID will be held?
2. Is the Royal Commission on track to meet the deadline to hand down its final report on 12 November 2020? Are you aware of any issues that could prevent the Royal Commission meeting this deadline?
3. When do you expect the Royal Commission will resume public hearings?

Answer:

1. In May 2020, the Royal Commission announced its intention to inquire into the impact of COVID-19 on residential and home aged care, consistent with its terms of reference to examine the aged care system in Australia. The Royal Commission has invited submissions from the public and organisations on any relevant matter, including COVID-19, until 31 July 2020. The timing of public hearings will be a matter for the Royal Commission to determine.
2. The Royal Commission is now required to deliver its final report by 26 February 2021, after an extension was granted due to the impact of COVID-19.
3. The Royal Commission resumed public hearings on 15 July 2020.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

29 May 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000338

Question Subject: Workforce shortages in aged care

Type of Question: Written

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Question:

Have you had complaints from rural and remote aged care providers about workforce shortages and difficulties in getting staff?

Answer:

The Department of Health (the Department) has not received any complaints or correspondence about workforce shortages and/or difficulties in getting staff from aged care providers, including those in rural and remote areas.

Where there has been a case of COVID-19 in an aged care service, services have reported some staff shortages and difficulties in filling shifts. In these circumstances, the Department and the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission work closely with state and territory governments and service providers to provide assistance and support, which includes workforce support and supplementation when required.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

29 May 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000341

Question Subject: Rural and remote home care packages

Type of Question: Written

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Question:

What has been the impact of COVID-19 on the delivery of rural and remote home care packages?

Answer:

Based on data that was available as of 2 June 2020, the Department can confirm:

- prices published on the My Aged Care service finder by providers operating in rural and remote locations, have remained stable during 2019-20 with no material changes since the outbreak of COVID-19.
- the number of approved providers that have indicated in My Aged Care they are able to provide services in rural and remote locations has remained stable.
- package take-up rates by people who live in a rural and remote location offered a home care package over the past few months are tracking to be consistent with take-up rates prior to the outbreak of COVID-19.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

29 May 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000342

Question Subject: Support workers in the disability and aged care sectors

Type of Question: Written

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Question:

1. The Government announced an additional 10,000 base level support workers in the disability and aged care sectors. What areas of need does the Department anticipate these additional support workers will fill within the aged care sector? How will the Government facilitate placements for these support workers?
2. Has training of these new workers commenced?
2. When will these support workers commence work?
3. How will they be made available to providers?
4. Is the Government looking at other policy options to increase the hours of care per resident?

Answer:

1. Please refer to Department of Education, Skills and Employment
2. Please refer to Department of Education, Skills and Employment
3. Please refer to Department of Education, Skills and Employment
4. Please refer to Department of Education, Skills and Employment
5. The Department of Health continually monitors and provides advice to government on improvements to the quality of care for recipients of aged care services.

The Aged Care Quality Standards, which commenced on 1 July 2019, require approved providers of aged care to ensure they have a workforce that is sufficient, skilled and qualified to provide safe, respectful and quality care.