

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: IQ20-000678

Tracking of new cases in residential aged care facilities

Spoken

Hansard Page number: 4

Senator: Katy Gallagher

Question:

CHAIR: Are you tracking where the new cases in residential aged care are?

Ms Laffan: We are, yes.

Mr Lye: We certainly are.

CHAIR: Can you tell me how that's been going in the last fortnight?

Dr Murphy: There's been a steady reduction. As you can see from the graph in my opening statement, the case numbers are dropping. The number of facilities with active outbreaks is reducing every day, and the number of cases is reducing.

CHAIR: Sure, but my question is: are there new infections happening?

Dr Murphy: There have been small numbers in the last week, but they are small numbers of staff and residents. We can get the exact data, but it's progressively declining in parallel with the community transmission.

Answer:

The last new active case of COVID-19 in a residential aged care recipient was identified on 26 September 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 September 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000692

Summary of issues provided to AHPPC from the Aged Care Advisory Group

Spoken

Hansard Page number: 26

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Question:

Senator SIEWERT: Can I go to the Aged Care Advisory Group. It's only recently been established. Has it provided any advice to the AHPPC yet?

Dr Murphy: It has. It's met on several occasions. Ms Laffan can provide some information. It's been meeting more than weekly.

Ms Laffan: On 10 occasions.

Dr Murphy: And it's provided a lot of advice to AHPPC.

Senator SIEWERT: What has it been providing advice on?

Mr Lye: A range of issues. One of the most recent issues was a preparedness template. This is in conjunction with the ability for states and territories to stand up joint operations centres like the VACRC. The advisory group considered a template for readiness and as a piece of advice. That's going to be provided—I think it has been provided—to states and territories to assist them with their planning for that. But it's considered a range of issues.

Senator SIEWERT: Can you please outline what other issues they've considered and provided.

Mr Lye: Yes. It has considered the role of general practitioners and Primary Health Networks, strategies to engage them in residential aged care, and considerations on addressing COVID-19 in homecare settings. It has had some consideration of the on-site clinical leads to support enhanced infection control capability. It has looked at the measures to support the safe visitation of older Australians in aged-care facilities. It's been quite busy in the time. It's considered a number of issues. We can probably give you, on notice, a summary that gives you a sense of the span of issues.

Answer:

The AHPPC Aged Care Advisory Group (ACAG) was established on 21 August 2020 by the Prime Minister to advise the AHPPC about aged care policy related to COVID-19. It brings together expertise about the aged care sector, infection control, emergency preparedness, consumer advocacy and public health response.

As of 26 November 2020, ACAG has met 22 times, at a rate of approximately two meetings per week, since 26 August 2020.

While the Department is unable to provide detailed information on matters that are still subject to AHHPC or other Government consideration, the ACAG has considered and provided advice on topics including:

- CDNA National guidelines;
- establishment of Aged Care Response Centres across jurisdictions;
- escalation and response protocols in the event of a COVID-19 transmission;
- single-site workforce preparedness planning;
- visitation planning in Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACFs);
- planning for first 24 Hours of an outbreak;
- influenza vaccinations planning in RACFs;
- Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety's – Aged Care and COVID-19: a special report;
- deconditioning prevention and wellbeing;
- COVID-19 escalation tiers and aged care provider responses;
- Infection Prevention and Control planning; and
- the updated National COVID-19 Aged Care Plan.