

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Inquiry into Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

2 February 2022

PDR Number: IQ22-000014

Residential aged care facilities experiencing staff shortages

Spoken

Hansard page number: 25-26

Senator: Janet Rice

Question:

Senator RICE: How many of the 2,000-plus residential aged-care facilities are currently experiencing staff shortages? How many facilities have experienced extreme staffing shortages in the last 60 days? How many of those have received surge workforce support from the Commonwealth?

Senator Colbeck: That's a fairly detailed question. I suspect that I'll have to get some specific advice on all of those particular matters and provide the answers to you on notice. A significant number of facilities have had outbreaks, some of them worse than others. Some of them have been only a staff member or a resident, or a few staff members. But I'll have to take on notice the specific detail of that, because it's a fairly complex set of information. But I'm happy to do that and provide that for the committee.

Senator RICE: Okay. On notice, then, how many aged-care workers have left the sector in the last 60 days, while the government is tracking rates of resignation and job vacancies, and what comparative data have you got? I suggest this is absolutely critical data that you should have your fingers on the pulse of. We're in the third year of a global pandemic. It's just extraordinary that you're not able to at least have some level of knowledge of this critical data here today.

Answer:

The Department has provided surge workforce support to 259 residential aged care facilities experiencing COVID-19 outbreaks between 8 December 2021 and 9 February 2022. This support is targeted to supporting facilities to manage the workforce impacts of COVID-19 and supplements the provider's responsibilities to ensure a sustainable workforce.

The Department has been monitoring aged care workforce data from providers on a weekly basis since the middle of 2021, through the COVID-19 vaccine rollout. Aged care providers supply data directly to the Department through the My Aged Care portal.

Providers are directed to include:

- all permanent, casual and agency workers currently engaged by each service
- workers reported by the facility they work for the most, thus removing duplicates across a provider
- agency staff for residential aged care services where they work their most regular and frequent shifts
- students on placement at a RAC facility or volunteers.

The data does not include workers who are on leave; or people who provide services to residents at a residential aged care service but are not employed by the service (such as visiting allied health professionals, hairdressers or other in-reach services).

Table 1 below shows data reported to the Department over the period 8 December 2021 to 9 February 2022.

Table 1. All workers: Residential Aged Care (RAC), Home Care Provider Packages (HCPP), Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) and Flexible Aged Care providers.

Date	RAC	HCPP	CHSP	Flexi. Care*	Total
Wed 8 Dec	263,355	115,281	107,481	5,171	491,288
Wed 15 Dec	263,009	113,982	105,703	5,293	487,987
Wed 22 Dec	263,351	112,558	106,043	4,117	486,069
Wed 5 Jan	263,385	115,419	105,333	4,132	488,269
Wed 12 Jan	263,721	113,396	105,066	4,152	486,335
Wed 19 Jan	263,425	115,677	107,351	4,153	490,606
Wed 26 Jan	263,064	116,123	106,576	4,143	489,906
Wed 2 Feb	263,310	116,373	107,234	4,161	491,078
Wed 9 Feb	263,185	128,447**	107,667	4,173	503,472

*Flexible aged care providers of Short Term Restorative Care (STRC) delivered in a residential aged care setting.

** One of the largest approved providers for the HCPP in terms of staff numbers increased their staff volume to include subcontracted staff not previously reported. This resulted in a spike at 9 February 2022.