

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

7 August 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000442

PPE request

Written

Senator: Katy Gallagher

Question:

1. How many residential or home service providers have requested access to the PPE National Medical Stockpile (NMS)? Please provide the number as a total as well as a breakdown for March, April, May, June, July and August and by state and territory.
2. How many residential or home service providers have made more than one request to access PPE from the NMS? Please provide the number as a total as well as a breakdown for March, April, May, June, July and August and by state and territory.
3. How many residential or home care service providers made a request to access the PPE NMS via the dedicated mailbox for PPE requests that has been established (IQ20-000317)? Please provide the number as a total as well as a breakdown for March, April, May, June, July and future months and by state and territory.

Answer:

1. How many residential or home service providers have requested access to the PPE National Medical Stockpile (NMS)?

All residential and in home aged care provider PPE requests to access the NMS by month and state/territory, as at 24 August 2020.

Note: Numbers are approximate due to duplicate or combined service requests

State or territory	March	April	May	June	July	August	Total, as at 24 August 2020
ACT	10	3	0	0	0	0	13
NSW	316	178	45	1	37	28	605
NT	9	5	0	0	0	0	14
QLD	182	53	7	0	11	39	292
SA	31	8	2	2	3	3	49

TAS	29	98	2	1	2	2	134
VIC	255	127	40	26	621	559	1,628
WA	73	37	6	4	2	0	122
Multi-jurisdiction	5	2	0	1	0	0	8
TOTAL	910	511	102	35	676	631	2,865

2. How many residential or home service providers have made more than one request to access PPE from the NMS?

A total of 313 residential and in-home aged care providers made more than one request to access PPE from the NMS between March to mid-August 2020 (as at 24 August 2020). This includes requests from providers for additional supplies following fulfilment of initial requests.

3. **How many residential or home care service providers made a request to access the PPE NMS via the dedicated mailbox for PPE requests that has been established (IQ20-000317)?** Please provide the number as a total as well as a breakdown for March, April, May, June, July and future months and by state and territory

Residential and in home aged care provider PPE requests to access the NMS made to dedicated Aged Care COVID PPE mailbox by month and state/territory as at 24 August 2020

Note: Numbers are approximate due to duplicate or combined service requests

State or territory	March	April	May	June	July	August	Total, as at 24 August 2020
ACT	8	2	0	0	0	0	10
NSW	298	118	21	1	46	54	538
NT	13	6	0	0	0	0	19
QLD	197	47	6	0	19	82	351
SA	26	5	1	2	1	2	37
TAS	29	22	1	1	2	0	55
VIC	281	92	31	18	422	283	1,127
WA	70	22	6	2	3	0	103
Multi-jurisdiction	8	2	0	1	0	0	11
TOTAL	930	316	66	25	493	421	2,251

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Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

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7 August 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000456

Compulsory masks:

Written

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Question:

Why were masks not made compulsory in aged care facilities until 13 July, which is a week after Victoria went into its second lockdown?

Answer:

The requirement for all aged care workers in Victoria's lockdown zones to wear surgical masks followed a recommendation from the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC). This requirement was put in place in addition to all other infection control and staff screening measures already in place in the aged care sector to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

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7 August 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000461

Mobilising the surge workforce

Written

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Question:

How quickly can the surge workforce be mobilised and what are some of the barriers to mobilising the surge workforce?

Answer:

The available surge workforce can be mobilised as soon as required, usually within 24 hours of a need being identified/requested.

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Department of Health

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7 August 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000464

What percentage of the surge workforce sent to Victoria are nurses

Written

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Question:

What percentage of the surge workforce sent to Victoria are nurses?

Answer:

The numbers of surge workforce deployed to Victorian Aged Care residential aged care facilities from interstate changes daily as staff arrive and depart. As at 17 August 2020, around 200 surge staff have been deployed to Victoria from interstate, of which up to 30 per cent are nurses.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

7 August 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000466

Question Subject: Exclusion of retention bonus for Commonwealth Home Support staff

Type of Question: Written

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Question:

I understand that state and local government employees working in Commonwealth funded residential or home care are eligible for the bonus - but Commonwealth Home Support Program staff are not eligible. Why are CHSP staff excluded from the retention bonus?

How are you ensuring that eligible staff will have their bonus passed on to them by their provider?

Answer:

- The COVID-19 aged care retention bonus is a measure focussed on direct care workers, recognising the particular role they play in the care of individuals.
- Specific funding of \$120.2 million has been made available to CHSP providers to cover the increased cost of service delivery and maintain and expand entry-level CHSP services for clients affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. This funding includes \$70.2 million for ad hoc grants, open to all CHSP service providers. CHSP providers have also been given increased flexibility in the use of grant funds, including the ability to continue paying staff despite a net reduction in demand for CHSP services during the COVID-19 period.
- The Department of Health has procured PriceWaterhouse Coopers to undertake random and targeted audits on providers to ensure correct claims and payments are made to eligible workers.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

7 August 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000468

Question Subject: Amount of providers applying for the retention bonus across the country

Type of Question: Written

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Question:

How many providers have now applied for the retention bonus across the country?

Answer:

As at 31 August 2020, 1,606 applications have been received, with over 95 per cent of residential aged care providers having applied to date and others have been actively followed up.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

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Australian Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

7 August 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000469

Announcement of face to face infection control training:

Written

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Question:

Why did it take until there were significant outbreaks across multiple aged care facilities for the Government to announce face to face infection control training?

Answer:

All aged care providers are responsible under the Quality Standards to ensure their staff have the necessary training, including in infection control practices and procedures, and in the appropriate use of personal protective equipment, including gloves, masks, face shields and gowns.

The Department of Health initially provided online infection control training to ensure rapid rollout and maximise coverage, while maintaining adherence to infection prevention and control measures, including physical distancing.

Since 15 March 2020, aged care workers have been able to access 10 free online training modules to upskill in infection prevention and control, correct use of personal protective equipment and a range and cleaning specific to COVID-19. As at 14 August 2020, 1,209,337 people have completed the foundation infection prevention and control training module.

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7 August 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000470

Analysis of online infection control training

Written

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Question:

Have you done any analysis on the effectiveness of online infection control training versus face to face delivery?

Did you consider making this online infection control training compulsory?

Answer:

Commonwealth law requires approved providers of aged care homes to meet the Aged Care Quality Standards (the Standards) to ensure quality care and services are provided to all care recipients.

Under the Standards, providers are required to demonstrate the workforce is recruited, trained, equipped and supported to deliver the outcomes required by the Standards. Providers may satisfy this requirement by mandating its staff complete the online e-learning program, or by an equivalent mode of study.

The Department of Health (Department) provided online infection control training to ensure rapid rollout and maximise coverage, while maintaining adherence to infection prevention and control measures, including physical distancing.

In addition to the online infection control training, the Department developed an online training module on personal protective equipment (PPE) for aged care workers, fact sheets, posters, checklists, a flowchart on when to wear PPE in aged care and a video on how to wear PPE. The Department also produces a newsletter for aged care providers on COVID-19, which is released twice a week.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

7 August 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000471

Face to face infection control training

Written

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Question:

Why didn't the Government offer face to face infection control training to aged care workers given the significant risk covid-19 poses to older people receiving care?

Answer:

All aged care providers are responsible under the Quality Standards to ensure their staff have the necessary training, including in infection control practices and procedures, and in the appropriate use of personal protective equipment, including gloves, masks, face shields and gowns.

The Department of Health (Department) provided online infection control training to ensure rapid rollout and maximise coverage, while maintaining adherence to infection prevention and control measures, including physical distancing.

Aged care workers can access 10 free online training modules to upskill in infection prevention and control, correct use of personal protective equipment and a range and cleaning specific to COVID-19. As at 14 August 2020, 1,209,337 people have completed the foundation infection prevention and control training module.

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Australian Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

7 August 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000472

Update to the number of aged care workers completing the online infection control training

Written

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Question:

Please update QON IQ20-000312 in relation to the number of aged care workers who have completed the online infection control training.

Answer:

As at 14 August 2020, 1,209,337 people have completed the foundation infection prevention and control training module. In addition, completion rates of the aged care-specific modules are as follows:

Course name	Completions
COVID 19 - Aged Care Module 1 - Personal Safety	151,232
COVID 19 - Aged Care Module 2 - Families and Visitors - Part 1 - Residential Care	114,553
COVID 19 - Aged Care Module 2 - Families and Visitors - Part 2 - In-home Care	108,830
COVID 19 - Aged Care Module 3 - COVID 19 and Aged Care	119,892
COVID 19 - Aged Care Module 4 - Outbreak Management Procedures	112,128
COVID 19 - Aged Care Module 5 - Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	117,919
COVID 19 - Aged Care Module 6 - Laundry	90,437
COVID 19 - Aged Care Module 7 - Cleaning	75,807
COVID 19 - Aged Care Module 8 - If you suspect a person has coronavirus COVID-19	105,131

Course name	Completions
COVID 19 - Aged Care Module 9 - Supporting Older Australians - Part 1 Residential Care	67,368
COVID 19 - Aged Care Module 9 - Supporting Older Australians - Part 2 In-Home Care	65,548

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Australian Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

7 August 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000475

Question Subject: Suspension of home care services to older people

Type of Question: Written

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Question:

Are you aware of home care providers suspending services to older people? Can you name these providers, locations and type of aged care service they provide? What are you doing to address this?

Answer:

Recipient directed suspension of services

Home Care recipients can choose to suspend services under certain circumstances. Some care recipients receiving Home Care Packages and Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) support may have asked their providers to cease services due to COVID-19 concerns.

Anecdotal advice from CHSP service providers, the Community Grants Hub and the Health Grants Network indicates that some care recipients voluntarily ceased or reduced services during the pandemic but were encouraged to re-engage with care, including through providers and Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN).

Department directed suspension of services

On 20 March 2020, the Department ceased all CHSP in-person group activities to limit community contact and protect vulnerable older Australians from COVID-19. During this period, the Department actively encouraged providers to implement new models of engagement including by telephone and internet, instead of the usual face-to-face approach where appropriate.

On 30 May 2020, the Department advised CHSP service providers that they could begin resuming some in-person group activities as long as they adhered to their state/territory government's guidelines around social distancing, gathering sizes and care of vulnerable cohorts.

To support these care recipients during this period and to ensure that resources were still being applied to the benefit of care recipients, the Department granted all CHSP Respite and Social Support Group providers additional flexibility to re-direct their staff, funding and resources towards the delivery of other high needs and critical care services such as Meals, Unaccompanied Grocery Shopping and Web/Telephone Contact.

The Department initiated welfare checks between the OPAN and providers. OPAN made outbound calls to some people receiving home care packages who ceased their normal services due to COVID 19. The service is based on referrals that can be made by aged care providers, health professionals or friends/family provided they have the individual's consent. Promotion of the service was undertaken together with wider communication about the Older Person's 1800 COVID Support line.

The Department issued a guide in early April 2020 to assist providers manage during the COVID-19 pandemic. The guide can be accessed via the Department's website and this link: www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/05/coronavirus-covid-19-guide-for-home-care-providers.pdf.

The guide provides information on how to protect staff and care recipients from COVID-19, including accessing personal protective equipment and minimising the risk of spread of infection. It also encourages contact with care recipients temporarily not receiving services to monitor their safety and well-being.

Provider directed suspension of services

The Department was made aware by several advocacy groups during the early months of the pandemic that some CHSP service providers had reduced some service types (e.g. lawn mowing/gardening services) to minimise the risk of community spread, exposure to workforce and to divert resources to other services (e.g. meals and grocery shopping). On 30 May 2020, the Department advised all CHSP service providers that, with the exception of in-person group activities, it regarded all services as "essential" and that all providers were expected to continue offering and delivering services safely and in accordance with state/territory guidance around social distancing and infection control.