

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

26 May 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000303

Question Subject: Visitation and screening changes

Type of Question: Written

Senator: Katy Gallagher

Question:

There is a set of criteria around access to the PPE National Stockpile. Will this criteria change due to the new visitation code and the additional screening processes that service providers may have to instigate?

Answer:

If aged care providers are experiencing immediate shortages due to COVID-19 related issues and are unable to obtain masks from any other source, the National Medical Stockpile (NMS) will provide a supply to supplement existing supplies for aged care providers. All requests will be considered, and if appropriate, approval will be given to dispatch stock from the states and territories who are distributing NMS supplies to aged care providers, on behalf of the Commonwealth.

Requests will be reviewed and triaged based on need and urgency, with priority given to aged care providers where there has been a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19. Providers are expected to explore alternative supply options before making a request to the NMS.

The Department of Health will continue to take into account whether there is an active outbreak at the facility, or where the provider has demonstrated a critical shortage which may impact on safe continuity of care.

Neither the visitation code nor the additional screening process impact on these criteria.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

26 May 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000316

Question Subject: Success of the telehealth consultations and specialist

Type of Question: Written

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Question:

Is the Department measuring the success of the telehealth consultations and specialist onsite pathology services? If these services are successful, will they continue in the future?

Answer:

The Department is working with health and system experts to monitor and review the implementation, use and impact of the temporary Medicare telehealth items and the Medicare items and contracted aged care services for SARS-CoV-2 pathology testing. The COVID-19 measures will conclude on 30 September 2020. Any subsequent or revised measure is a matter for Government.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

26 May 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000328

Question Subject: Facemasks to aged care facilities

Type of Question: Written

Senator: Katy Gallagher

Question:

How many of the facemasks announced by Minister Hunt on 18 April went to residential and home care providers?

Answer:

On 18 April 2020, Minister Hunt announced the arrival of 58 million masks into the National Medical Stockpile.

As at 3 June 2020, 2.4 million masks have been provided to States and Territories to support deployments to both residential aged care and home care providers on the Commonwealth's behalf. An additional 1.5 million masks are also available to be deployed to jurisdictions for this purpose should they be required.

In exceptional circumstances deployments have been made directly from the National Medical Stockpile to residential aged care facilities where there is particular urgency, for example during an outbreak.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

26 May 2020

PDR Number: IQ20-000331

Question Subject: Midwifery guidelines or directives during the pandemic

Type of Question: Written

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Question:

What action has been undertaken to ensure health services are following guidelines or directives during the pandemic?

Answer:

The Australian Government has provided national advice on the delivery of health services during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is applicable to both public and private hospitals and is inclusive of the delivery of maternity services. The advice can be found 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/providing-health-care-face-to-face-during-covid-19.

The Australian Government has also funded the National COVID-19 Clinical Evidence Taskforce to develop evidence-based guidelines for health care professionals. The Taskforce is currently reviewing evidence to develop recommendations and flowcharts to guide practice for pregnant and perinatal women. Further information can be accessed at www.covid19evidence.net.au/#further-guidance.

Most midwifery models of care are delivered through public hospitals and fall under the responsibility of state and territory governments. It is therefore up to state and territory governments to determine how they deliver these models of care, apply any relevant guidelines and monitor compliance.

Under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (Scheme), the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) is responsible for all matters relating to the registration and regulation of nurses in Australia. The Board is supported in its role by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) and both bodies operate independently of government. The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as enacted in each jurisdiction, underpins the Scheme, including the requirement for all National Boards to set minimum standards, codes and guidelines for professional practice, and provides National Boards with powers to regulate registered health practitioners.

Ahpra has a complaints process by which any member of the public can inform them about concerning practise of any particular registered health practitioner (whether on the Ahpra register or pandemic sub-register). Once received, the relevant National Board commences an investigation of the complaint and decides whether it is appropriate to take any action, in the interest of public safety. This notification process has not changed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Further information about this process is available at www.Ahpra.com.au/notifications.aspx.

Many pregnant women also receive antenatal care through models of care that are partially or fully funded through the Medical Benefits Schedule (MBS). During the COVID-19 pandemic, all existing MBS face-to-face items are still available to practitioners who need to see their patients in person. Telehealth services may only be provided where it is safe and clinically appropriate to provide the service in this manner. This is clearly outlined in all Government material and communications regarding the new telehealth services. In the case of antenatal care, relevant guidelines, such as the Australian Government developed Clinical Practice Guidelines - Pregnancy Care, should be considered when determining what type of service to provide.

The Department of Health will be conducting its standard compliance activities regarding the new temporary telehealth services.

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: IQ20-000357

Question Subject: COVID-19 training module

Type of Question: Written

Senator: Stirling Griff

Question:

On 27 May 2020 the Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme was interviewed on ABC Radio Adelaide by David Bevan where the Minister stated:

"The 18th of March, well ahead of anyone understanding this case, a clear directive was given to me for the agency to contact all 64,000 very, very, very vulnerable Australians as we went into pandemic..."

Can the Minister representing the Minister for NDIS advise:

1. How many NDIS workers have completed the Department of Health's free online training module: Infection prevention and control for COVID-19 in a) February 2020 b) March 2020 c) April 2020 and d) May 2020?
2. When did the Government partner with Aspen Medical to develop the COVID-19 training module on infection control and was that process a competitive tender?

Answer:

1. The Australian Government Infection Control Training Module "How to protect yourself and the people you are caring for from infection with COVID-19" was made available online on 15 March 2020.

As at 7am 8 June 2020, 865,154 people have completed the basic infection prevention and control training course, including more than 67,000 disability care workers. By month, completion rates are as follows:

| Month | Completions by disability care workers | Cumulative total |
|------------|--|------------------|
| March 2020 | 35,000 | 35,000 |
| April 2020 | 22,000 | 57,000 |
| May 2020 | 9,000 | 66,000 |

2. The Department of Health engaged Aspen Medical to develop the training modules on 11 March 2020 through a Direct Source procurement process.