

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2010-11, 23 February 2011

Question: E11-190

OUTCOME 12: Health Workforce Capacity

Topic: RECRUITMENT OF OVERSEAS TRAINED DOCTORS

Written Question on Notice

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

- a) The DoHA annual report (p311) indicates that department had a recruitment target of 100 overseas trained doctors in 2009-10, but managed to achieve only 51. What is the reason for the lower numbers?
- b) The annual report notes that changed registration and accreditation arrangements figured in the reduced recruitment – can you explain in what way?
- c) New incentives were introduced last July to boost recruitment – what impact have they had?

Answer:

a and b)

Rural Health Workforce Australia (RHWA) is funded by the Department to administer the International Recruitment Strategy (IRS) through its seven member Rural Workforce Agency network.

During the first half of 2009-10, 12 overseas-trained doctors (OTDs) were recruited under the IRS. RHWA reported that delays in transitional arrangements for the establishment of a nationally consistent assessment process had contributed to the low result. (The nationally consistent assessment process to which the RHWA refers consists of new registration requirements and assessments accredited by the Australian Medical Council. The National Registration and Accreditation Scheme was not introduced until 1 July 2010, and would not have affected recruitment during 2009-10.)

However, from 1 January 2010 the number of doctors recruited under the program has increased, with 40 doctors recruited between 1 January and 30 June 2010 and 53 doctors between 1 July and 31 December 2010.

The total number of doctors recruited under the IRS in 2009-10 was 52, not 51 as reported in the Department's Annual Report 2009-2010. Under-reporting is attributed to a late amendment by the Western Australian Rural Workforce Agency.

- c) The Rural Health Workforce Strategy introduced a range of financial and non-financial incentives to attract overseas trained doctors to work in rural and remote areas, including:
- The scaling incentive for overseas-trained doctors and foreign graduates of accredited medical schools. As of 31 January 2011, an average 1,910 participants per month have received a non-financial reward for services provided in regional, rural or remote areas of Australia. As a result of scaling, between 1 July 2010 and 31 March 2011, 158 doctors will have completed their return of service obligations earlier and will no longer be restricted to practise in a district of workforce shortage.