

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2010-2011, 23 February 2011

Question: E11-199

OUTCOME 5: Primary Care

Topic: MATERNITY SERVICES REVIEW

Written Question on Notice

Senator Adams asked:

- a) What progress has there been with follow up from the Maternity Services Review? (At the time the Minister promised a new Maternity Services Plan, including additional scholarships for GPs and midwives to expand the maternity workforce, particularly in rural and remote Australia)?
- b) The Review/Plan also indicated that the states and territories would be asked to make complementary commitments and investments particularly around the provision of birthing centres and rural maternity units. What progress has been made with the states and territories on funding for rural maternity units?
- c) How many additional scholarships have been provided to GPs and midwives to provide maternity services in rural and remote Australia?

Answer:

- a) The Australian Government responded to the Maternity Services Review in 2009-10 through the Improving Maternity Services Budget Measure, which committed \$120.5 million to improve access to and choice of maternity care for Australian women. As part of this Budget measure 20 scholarships for midwives to attend specific courses to enable them to become eligible midwives (under the new arrangements with Medicare) will be funded and advertised from July 2011.

Additionally scholarships funded by the Australian Government for health professionals working in rural and remote Australia include the:

- Nurse Scholarship Program, offered across two streams:
 - Continuing Professional Education for Rural and Remote Nurses; and
 - National Nurse Re-entry; and the
- Nursing and Allied Health Scholarship and Support Scheme which is offered in four areas:
 - Aboriginal Medical Service - Professional Development
 - Postgraduate
 - Nurse Re-entry
 - Continuing Professional Development.

Further to this, on 12 November 2010 the Australian Health Ministers' Conference endorsed the National Maternity Services Plan, which was a 2007 election commitment.

- b) Under the National Maternity Services Plan the Commonwealth and state and territory governments have agreed to work to increase access to local maternity services by expanding the range of models of care, and to support workforce initiatives in rural and remote areas. The Commonwealth Government is collaborating with states and territories on implementing the first year action items in the plan and regular reports on progress will be provided to Australian Health Minister's Advisory Council.
- c) Since 2006, 316 scholarships have been awarded to midwives to provide maternity services in rural and remote Australia under the Nursing and Allied Health Scholarship Scheme. An additional 20 scholarships will be advertised in July 2011 for specific courses to credential registered midwives as eligible midwives.

There are 32 Australian Government funded scholarships available for GPs with 26 of these being awarded to rural general practitioners for obstetric training, and six being awarded to rural general practitioners for anaesthetics training.