

**Senate Community Affairs Committee**  
**ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**  
**SOCIAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO**  
**2013-14 Additional Estimates Hearings**

**Outcome Number:** 8

**Question No:** 688

**Topic:** Aged Care Home emergencies

**Hansard Page:** 27/02/2014 CA59

**Senator Smith** asked:

How many emergency situations have aged care homes found themselves in? I am interested that the department has responded and what the department's response has been.

**Answer:**

During the 2013-2014 high risk season, bushfires were the primary cause of aged care homes activating emergency event management procedures. Eight facilities were evacuated due to bushfires and one evacuated due to poor air quality resulting from a mine fire. In total, over 550 aged care residents were temporarily relocated. The evacuations occurred in New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria.

During the 2012-13 season, between January and March 2013, flood and bushfire events in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria led to the partial or complete evacuation of over 200 residents from five aged care homes.

The primary responsibility for responding to emergency events lies with state, territory and local governments. However, the Department, in liaison with state health and emergency management agencies, monitors and provides support to service providers threatened by emergency events.

The Department has established consistent procedures for supporting the response to emergency events that impact on residential and community aged care recipients, including development of liaison and communication processes with state and territory health emergency management entities.

The specific role of the Department during emergency events is to:

- In consultation with local and state authorities, support providers, if required, to identify suitable alternative places for residents in other aged care facilities outside the area of threat.
- Monitor the temporary care arrangements made for residents during and after an emergency event.
- Establish and maintain effective communication and collaboration with state and local governments.
- When required, provide relevant information to existing free-call numbers (such as the Aged Care Hotline or Aged Care Complaints Scheme) to equip them to respond to queries from concerned parties, including residents, families and providers.
- Administer any Australian Government measures to provide additional funding to assist affected aged care services to recover from an emergency event if required.