

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2011-2012, 30/31 May 2011

Question: E11-294

OUTCOME 4: Aged Care and Population Ageing

Topic: AGED CARE COMPLAINTS

Written Question on Notice

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

- a) Is the Department working with the industry to reform the Complaints Investigation System?
- b) Can you advise where this initiative is up to?

Answer:

- a) The Department has been engaging with consumer groups, aged care providers, industry peak bodies and other stakeholders on reforms to the Aged Care Complaints Scheme (the Scheme). The Department established a technical reference group to consult and collaborate with on key reforms activities. The group represents peak bodies, consumers, aged care staff and health professionals.

In February 2011, the Department released a discussion paper on the proposed complaints management framework. The Department received 42 submissions from a range of approved providers, consumer advocacy services, unions and peak industry bodies, the Aged Care Commissioner and other key stakeholders.

Feedback was positive and the Department has considered and incorporated the feedback during the finalisation of the framework.

The Department consulted stakeholders in June 2011 on the draft of the Complaints Principles, and has considered and incorporated feedback to finalise the drafting of the legislation.

b) The Department has made significant achievements towards the reform of the Scheme, including:

- comprehensive training for staff focused on natural justice, improved communication and weighing of evidence;
- establishment of the Clinical Unit to provide enhanced clinical advice for Scheme staff;
- a reduction in the number of long-wait cases; and
- recruitment of additional resources to provide for more timely responses to complaints.

The Complaints Principles legislation to support the new complaint management framework is currently being finalised, and is expected to take effect from 1 September 2011.