

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2011-2012, 30/31 May 2011

Question: E11- 041

OUTCOME 4: Aged Care and Population Ageing

Topic: ACCREDITATION STANDARDS FOR RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE

Written Question on Notice

Senator Adams asked:

- a) I understand that the Department has produced a Discussion Paper on a revised set of accreditation standards for residential aged care. What consultation is occurring with the aged care industry about these standards?
- b) I have been advised by providers who have attended these consultations that they are concerned it is “just for show” and that their comments will simply be ignored and that no changes will be made to the current version. Can you explain how these new standards will improve the existing quality system?
- c) Providers have told me quite vigorously that the new standards will create a higher level of uncertainty about assessment outcomes and will be considerably more costly than the existing process.

Can the Department advise:

- d) if any assessment of the cost to the aged care industry of converting from the existing standards to the new has been undertaken?
- e) is it correct that the review process commenced in August 2008 and when does the Department anticipate the process will be complete?
- f) will aged care providers be forced to change to the new standards mid-accreditation cycle?
- g) given that the existing standards lasted 13 years without change, what provision has been made in the new system for more regular reform to the standards to reflect industry practice, and is the Department aware of the industry wide involvement in the regular updating of the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards and the regular refreshing of these standards?
- h) if the ACHS standards have a significant input from industry, why does the Department act so paternalistically towards aged care?
- i) what thought, if any, has the Department given to the integration of the new standards and the reforms being recommended by the Productivity Commission?

Answer:

a) to i)

There is extensive consultation occurring on a draft set of revised Accreditation Standards. The Ageing Consultative Committee (ACC) has reviewed the draft Standards and nine consultation workshops were held across Australia during April and May 2011, attended by representatives from approved providers, peak bodies, unions, health professional organisations, consumer and carers groups. The draft set of Standards were also placed on the Department's website and 65 written submissions were received.

This comprehensive feedback has been provided to the Technical Reference Group (TRG) for consideration and the Department is working with the TRG to incorporate changes to the draft Standards. The TRG consists of consumers, academics, professionals and industry representatives with skills and experience in the areas of health and aged care standards and residential aged care accreditation. The Department will also consult further with the ACC, make the revised draft Standards available to stakeholders and undertake a pilot.

The draft Standards aim to improve the quality system in residential aged care by better articulating the requirements of approved providers, increase the focus on resident centred care and provide a stronger framework for the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency (the Accreditation Agency) to monitor performance against the Standards.

The Department is still working with stakeholders on the revised draft Standards. A regulatory impact study of the revised Standards will assess any cost implications for approved providers. The TRG is considering the most appropriate approach for more regular review.

A number of factors will impact the timing for the implementation and system for regular review of the revised Standards. The Department is consulting with the Accreditation Agency on the best approach to ensure the least disruption during implementation and will consult further with industry. This will also take into account factors such as the findings from a pilot of the draft Standards, the accreditation cycles and the Government response to the Productivity Commission report.