

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 13 & 15 February 2013

Question: E13-237

OUTCOME 4: Aged Care and Population Ageing

Topic: Aged Care – Indigenous Workforce Measures

Type of Question: Hansard Page 47, 15 February 2013

Senator: Senator Fierravanti-Wells

Question:

In areas such as the Northern Territory, you have got issues of transience, few bonds, a culturally diverse workforce and, obviously, the need to deliver culturally appropriate care. The combination of these factors provides difficulties in terms of viability. How are these high costs of viability issues being addressed – and how will they be addressed – under the proposed changes under Living Longer Living Better?

Answer:

The Living Longer Living Better aged care reform package provided additional funding to improve access and equity to people living in regional Australia by helping to fund the higher delivery costs for aged care service providers in regional Australia. It also supported aged care homes that provide services to Indigenous Australians and older people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

As part of the 2011-12 Budget, measures were introduced to expand existing funding under the Viability Supplement to provide additional support to:

- aged care homes in very remote to moderately accessible locations that target low care;
- eligible aged care homes that provide specialist aged care services to Indigenous Australians; and
- eligible aged care homes that provide specialist aged care services to people with a history of (or who may be at severe risk of) homelessness.

The Living Longer Living Better package continued this expansion to become an ongoing part of the Viability Supplement.

In addition, the Living Longer Living Better package proposes a substantial increase to the current accommodation supplement which is expected to ease pressures on capital funding for residential care and is likely to promote the viability of aged care provision across Australia, as well as providing an added incentive to construct additional places. Due to overall lower levels of income and wealth in rural Australia, aged care providers are typically much more reliant on the government accommodation supplement than providers in urban areas, and thus the proposed substantial increase in this supplement is likely to benefit providers in rural and regional Australia more than those in urban areas.

The Rural, Regional and Other Special Needs Building Fund, will enable funding to be more flexibly targeted to deliver services in priority areas identified by the Government and therefore enable improved access to residential aged care.

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program provides recurrent funding to services to deliver quality, culturally appropriate aged care that meets the changing needs of older indigenous Australians specifically in rural and remote areas. Under Living Longer Living Better, an additional \$43.1 million was provided to expand this program by an additional 200 aged care places to allow more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with complex high care needs to stay close to their home and country in culturally appropriate care.